

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE



ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH



Class — 742
Book 11 525

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH



COLONEL HOUSE

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

BY

ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH

Author of

"Fighting the Turk in the Balkans," Etc.



NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

COPYRIGHT, 1918,
BY GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY



COPYRIGHT, 1918, BY THE NEW YORK EVENING POST CO.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO
HAROLD J. LEAROYD

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This is an intimate biography only in the sense that it reflects my own interpretation of Colonel House based upon an acquaintance and friendship of several years. It is in no sense official for I have not sought access to confidential papers nor have I asked for undue confidences from Colonel House.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I A MAN MORE MISUNDERSTOOD THAN MYSTERIOUS	13
II FROM A WESTERN BOYHOOD TO AN EASTERN COLLEGE	22
III TRUTH AND FICTION ABOUT HIS BUSI- NESS AFFAIRS	32
IV STEADFAST REFUSAL OF PUBLIC OF- FICE	42
V BEHIND THE SCENES IN HIS OWN STATE	54
VI WATCHING EVENTS AND BIDDING HIS TIME	64
VII GAYNOR AS A PRESIDENTIAL POSSI- BILITY	75
VIII RISE OF WILSON'S PRESIDENTIAL STAR	85
IX WILSON ON THE ROAD TO THE WHITE HOUSE	96
X HAPPENINGS AT THE BALTIMORE CON- VENTION	107
XI GOOD JUDGMENT IN A TICKLISH CAM- PAIGN	116

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
XII FORMATION OF MR. WILSON'S CABINET	127
XIII HIS PART IN NATIONAL CURRENCY REFORM	139
XIV FORESEEING THE WORLD WAR . .	150
XV THE PRESIDENT'S WARNING TO EUROPE	162
XVI AMERICA FACE TO FACE WITH WAR	176
XVII "THE FREEDOM OF THE SEAS" . .	187
XVIII PROBLEMS RAISED BY THE SUBMARINE	197
XIX PRESIDENT WILSON'S SECOND CAMPAIGN	209
XX LAST EFFORTS FOR PEACE . . .	222
XXI HIS SHARE IN THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR	237
XXII AT THE HEAD OF THE AMERICAN WAR MISSION	247
XXIII PREPARING FOR THE PEACE CONFERENCE	262
XXIV HIS ESTIMATE OF PRESIDENT WILSON	274
XXV METHODS OF WORK AND WAYS OF RELAXATION	286
XXVI HIS POLITICAL AIMS AND HIS FUTURE	296

ILLUSTRATIONS

COLONEL HOUSE	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	PAGES
COLONEL HOUSE AT TWENTY	26
THE APARTMENT AT NO. 115 EAST 53RD STREET, NEW YORK CITY	80
A CORNER IN COLONEL HOUSE'S STUDY WHERE HE INTERVIEWS HIS CALLERS	144
ENTRANCE TO DEVONSHIRE HOUSE, LONDON .	252
THE LATEST PICTURE OF COLONEL HOUSE WITH THE PRESIDENT, TAKEN SEPTEMBER, 1917	276

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

CHAPTER I

A MAN MORE MISUNDERSTOOD THAN MYSTERIOUS

COLONEL E. M. House—or plain Mr. House, as he prefers to be called—of Texas, is one of the most remarkable characters in American history. He stands forth commandingly, in a period of political turmoil and evolution, which has produced such contrasting figures as Woodrow Wilson, Theodore Roosevelt, Wilhelm II. of Germany, David Lloyd George, Raymond Poincaré, and General Ludendorff. Five years ago he was unknown to the public of this country. To-day his name has become a household word throughout the world. After President Wilson himself, no man in public life exerts so dominant an influence upon international affairs as this slim, quiet gentleman, who holds no office, who represents no special interest, who has no selfish ends to serve.

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

This may sound like eulogy. But it is not. A great deal may be said or written about Colonel House, but summed up in a simple phrase, his power for good or ill is based simply upon his disinterestedness. He holds a power never wielded before in this country by any man out of office, a power greater than that of any political boss or Cabinet member. He occupies a place in connection with the Administration which is anomalous, because no such place ever existed before Woodrow Wilson became President of the United States. He holds this power, and he occupies this place because the President knows that he can absolutely rely upon his unselfish service.

If you don't believe this, consider the proposition strictly from a utilitarian point of view. President Wilson is a very definite-minded individual, and two things he does not tolerate are inefficiency and disloyalty. Is it likely that Colonel House would have lasted so long if he had not satisfied the President on these two points? There is no use arguing that the President might have been deceived. A man in Colonel House's position has plenty of enemies, who dislike him or are jealous of his influence, and these would be quick to inform against him, if the opportunity occurred. The Republican National Committee has had every episode of House's life ransacked

MORE MISUNDERSTOOD THAN MYSTERIOUS

for evidence which would justify an attack upon him, and, through him, upon the President. But the cleverest detective has been unable to discover anything worth using.

Why? Because Colonel House is not in politics for himself, never has been in politics for himself, and has no personal ambitions to satisfy. He plays politics because he loves politics, because he cannot resist the pleasure of directing men and policies, any more than the born artist can keep his hands off paint-tubes and brushes. He is that rare individual in American life, the man who is provided with a comfortable income, who craves no addition to his worldly wealth, and takes advantage of being relieved of the necessity of toil to devote himself to the welfare of his party and his country.

The real Colonel House is not a man of mystery, neither is he a "Texas Sphinx"—whatever that may be!—or an errand-boy for the President, a sort of fetch-and-carry Man Friday, with a phonograph attachment. All of these rôles and many more have been assigned to him. The plain truth is that there is nothing mysterious about Colonel House. He is one of the frankest, openest men in the world, and to those who know him one of the two or three greatest Americans of this political generation. Until President Wilson writes his autobiography we shall not

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

know the extent of the influence House has had upon the President's policies. Colonel House will never breathe a word to indicate it; but there is ample excuse for assigning him credit as chief adviser in the formation of all of the President's important decisions.

Of his perspicuity in counsel, his sagacity and political foresight there has been ample testimony from Mr. Wilson and other Democratic leaders. It is safe to say that nobody appreciates Colonel House's value so highly as does the President. The President was fifty-five years old when they first met—an age when men, and especially men of Mr. Wilson's character, do not make close friendships readily—yet they became comrades at once, and their friendship has ripened and strengthened in the stormy years since past, until it has grown to be one of the most beautiful of which history has record. For it is a friendship based upon service. Colonel House's sole object is to help Mr. Wilson in his difficult task, and in helping him to help all Americans and all mankind, and to the President the advice of this man of crystal-clear vision and rigid fairness means acceleration of his gigantic projects for humanizing modern civilization. The net gainers by the coöperation are the Republic and the world.

Americans as a whole have not understood

MORE MISUNDERSTOOD THAN MYSTERIOUS

Colonel House, and perhaps they may be forgiven for this. For one thing, Colonel House stepped into semi-public life with a fixed aversion to publicity, and to understand the man it is necessary to recognize that this aversion, which is wholly without affectation, is the keystone of his character. He detests public attention of a personal nature. For instance, he is always willing to talk to any one who has a right to know about the public questions of the day, yet he will shy like a wild colt from the prospect of a character sketch. For a long time it was difficult to get a photograph of him, but finally he was broken to the camera, and he is now willing to pose on any legitimate occasion.

He prefers to work quietly toward his determined goal. This does not mean that he works mysteriously. He is quite open and above-board. But he has a theory that you do not need to call in the town brass band, enlist spellbinders, and hire a press agent to accomplish any worth-while purpose. This is not an American theory, but adapted to American ways and problems it has worked with surprising success. Indeed, whatever House puts his hand to has a way of working out satisfactorily. In business he would be called, not a man of mystery, but a wizard, for his gift is precisely that gift of the leaders of the world of capital and industry—the gift of

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

conception and foresight, combined with ability in organization.

Another reason for popular misunderstanding of House's character is the fact that no political leader ever before in this country occupied the place he created for himself. If you doubt this, cast your eye over the Administrations from Washington's on. There have been Presidential favorites, confidants, private advisers, boon-companions, cupmates. But never was there a man the President relied upon, who had no finger in the political pie. Mark Hanna, for example, cut nearly as important a figure in McKinley's time as does Colonel House to-day. But Hanna was the political boss incarnate. Colonel House has no axes, business or political, to grind. He has no worthy henchmen to land jobs for. He is not trying to build up political machines in this or that State. Patronage means nothing to him.

"Yes, I know he must be a great man," said a corporation head. "He's shown that. Wish we could get him on our board. But what I want to know is: What's his game? What's he getting out of this? There never lived a man who worked for nothing."

Cynical as it may seem, this man's argument has the germ of truth in it. He was quite correct in saying that "there never lived a man who worked for nothing." Colonel House works for

MORE MISUNDERSTOOD THAN MYSTERIOUS

the pleasure of doing things, big things, important things—and, therefore, interesting things. He has all the money he needs, and he enjoys devoting his talents to promoting the efficiency of American government, increasing the prestige of the Republic abroad, and furthering the winning of peace for a war-weary world. In his own words:

“People ask what I get out of it. My answer is that the only work that is worth while, the only work that brings satisfaction, is the work that is unselfish. I say this without desiring to be ostentatious. Examine yourself, and you will find it to be true. Consider men like Gen. Goethals or Charles W. Eliot. Imagine the wonderful pleasure, the heart-warming satisfaction, Goethals gained from building the Panama Canal on his meager salary of an engineer officer of the regular army. Or the satisfaction Dr. Eliot must have derived during the years he devoted to Harvard University. Take a man like Harri-man. I have always thought that he was not guided solely by personal ambition in his career. Underneath all his achievements was the desire to do things, and his gratification in accomplishment would have been much greater if he had not had to acquire a fortune along with it.

“Some people who do not care for pecuniary rewards, on the other hand, do like the purely

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

honorary badges of success. I happen not to care for the badges, either. Honors are all very well in their way, but I get more pleasure out of something I have done without reward, other than the appreciation of my friends, than I could from all the money and decorations in this country and Europe."

That is House.

Barring payment of his traveling expenses when he went abroad on official missions, he has never received a cent from the United States or any other Government. His modest personal fortune, as will be shown later on, has suffered, rather than increased, in consequence of his preoccupation with public affairs. The sum total of his reward so far for services of inestimable worth, has been the gratitude of the President and of the few persons who were cognizant of the debt the country owed him.

An extraordinary man, who was once described in *Figaro* of Paris, as "circulating imperturbable amidst the noisy circles, which, weighed down by intrigues, combinations, shameless bluff, and impossible deals, form the American electoral world!"

This description is not altogether pleasing to Americans or even to Colonel House, himself, but it shows that Europeans have grasped more definitely than Colonel House's countrymen, the nov-

MORE MISUNDERSTOOD THAN MYSTERIOUS

elty of his position in our public life. Men of this type have been known abroad for over a century, particularly in England, where the concentration of heritable wealth has developed the political dilettante, who could afford to mingle in politics without price or sordid aim. But it is questionable whether any country has produced a man, who has divorced himself so completely from practical politics, who has played the game so steadily with impersonal motive.

And it is flatly unjust to describe the man who nominated and elected four Governors of Texas, who picked Woodrow Wilson as the logical Democratic candidate for the Presidency in 1912, who helped materially to secure Wilson's nomination at the Baltimore Convention and to direct his two campaigns, who foresaw the world war a year before it happened, as a political dilettante. He is a political genius, this gray, quiet-voiced man, with the shrewd, unwinking eyes and the level voice. In Europe already they are speaking of him as the foremost expert on international politics among the statesmen of the Entente Allies. They believe in him because in 1914 and 1915 he prophesied events which occurred in 1916 and 1917.

CHAPTER II

FROM A WESTERN BOYHOOD TO AN EASTERN COLLEGE

EDWARD MANDELL HOUSE was born in Houston, Texas, July 26, 1858. His father was Thomas William House, and his mother before her marriage was Mary Elizabeth Shearn, daughter of Judge Shearn, one of the well-known early jurists of the State. He was the youngest of seven children. The Houses were of Dutch extraction, but the family had been domiciled in England for many generations before coming to this country. The elder House was one of that indomitable army of pioneers who created the famous tag of the '30s and '40s, of the last century—"G. T. T.," gone to Texas—which was pasted on office-doors in every city of the Eastern States, and all over the British Isles. He arrived in Texas when it was still a section of the Mexican Republic, then plunged in a bloody welter of civil strife after the brief-lived empire of Iturbide.

He fought under Sam Houston's lieutenant, General Burleson, grand-uncle of the present

WESTERN BOYHOOD TO EASTERN COLLEGE

Postmaster-General, in the victorious revolution of 1836, which ended in the foundation of the Lone Star Republic. Thomas William House lived under four flags in Texas in the course of his long life—the Mexican, the banner of the Texan Republic, the Stars and Bars of the Confederacy, and the Stars and Stripes of the Union. In his way, he must have been as distinctive a character as his son. He prospered exceedingly, acquiring large holdings of sugar-cane and cotton lands, and many slaves, besides developing a flourishing business as a private banker. He is still remembered by old Texans as a man of strong will and great business capacity.

Young House—"Ed" House to his boyhood friends—was born at a time when Texas was still, in the fullest sense of the word, a frontier State, although the actual frontier districts had been pushed westward of the seaboard counties. He grew up with a generation of men who had known "Davie" Crockett, James Bowie, Kit Carson, Mirabeau B. Lamar, Stephen Austin, Henry Smith, James W. Robinson, J. W. Fannin. The Alamo and San Jacinto were more than memories. Sam Houston himself was still alive—indeed, was elected Governor of Texas in 1859, the year after House was born, and strove without avail in 1861 to hold the State for the Union.

When the Civil War ended in 1865 House was

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

almost seven years old, and he was passing through the most observant period of youth during the tumultuous reconstruction days which followed, when Texas, like the other Southern States, was ruled by carpet-baggers and negroes, and for a short while tasted some of the miseries of a conquered people. He can remember when shooting frays were common occurrences in the streets of Houston; when the law of the pistol held sway all over the State, and a man who made enemies had to rely for safety on the quickness of his draw and the accuracy of his aim. Those were the days when Texas was still raw and crude, untamed and turbulent. The Comanches, Cheyennes, and Apaches ravaged the western counties; the bison roved in the Northwest, and the cowpuncher was in his glory. They were days which passed many years ago, and are reflected now only in the gaudy reproductions of the cinema.

"I think it is my memory of early times in Texas which keeps me from being as shocked as some people are at the dreadful slaughter of this war," he once remarked. "To a man who can remember when bad men killed for sport in open daylight in city streets and desperadoes swarmed in bands and ruled whole tracts of country, the destruction of European lands is not so startling, after all."

WESTERN BOYHOOD TO EASTERN COLLEGE

Young House grew up a hardy, sturdy child, as was natural in that frontier environment. He learned to shoot and ride a broncho, as boys nowadays learn to skate or ride a bicycle. Slightly built and quiet-mannered as he is to-day, it is difficult to believe that he is a dead-shot with the six-shooter or rifle. This is not an exaggeration. He has all the celerity of the old frontier in drawing and aiming the pistol. There are few Texas rangers who can beat him at it. He was a close second in this respect to his friend and instructor, the late Capt. "Bill" McDonald, one of the last of the gunmen of the "Shooting Times."

"Strangely enough, I have never done well with the shotgun," Colonel House admits. "I think this is because I have never cared about shooting things, and killing birds with small shot always has been repugnant to me. I have hunted larger game with the rifle, but hunting is not a sport that appeals to me. I learned to shoot because everybody in our country knew how to shoot. It was something worth knowing, too, and I have never regretted the time spent on it. There is always the chance it may be useful."

While he was still very young, Colonel House suffered a fall from a swing which caused brain fever and left him rather delicate. That was before drainage theories had been developed to

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

any extent, and the eastern portion of Texas was inclined to be malarial. A few years later, he sustained something like a heat-stroke, which weakened his resistance to climatic conditions to a point which made it imperative that he should be absent from the State for the greater part of the year. His father, of course, was a wealthy man, and it was decided that young House should be educated in the North, not only in consideration of his health, but because he showed a marked bookish tendency.

Given his pick of educational institutions, House determined to go to the Hopkins Grammar School at New Haven and prepare for Yale. This is one of the most ancient preparatory schools in New England, and among the students House found boys from many well-known families of the East and West, boys whose fathers were doing things in business and politics. He enjoyed himself to the full in the pleasant atmosphere of the school and of New Haven, which had not then become a blustering factory city, and still slumbered peacefully under its towering elms.

He was not a good scholar; he admits that himself, as do his schoolmates, quick though they are to pay tribute to his lovable qualities, his store of general knowledge, and his insatiable pursuit of everything which interested him. Ac-



COLONEL HOUSE AT TWENTY

WESTERN BOYHOOD TO EASTERN COLLEGE

cording to some of those former school friends, Colonel House in his 'teens was already demonstrating his ability as a pacifier in smoothing out student rows. But he, himself, scouts the idea.

"I was a quarrelsome boy, if the truth were known," he declares. "Well, perhaps, I was not so quarrelsome when I got to college. But I can remember, when I was younger, I used to like to set boys at each other to see what they would do and then try to bring them around again. I have been called a great student, too. As a matter of fact, I didn't give a hang for my studies in school or college. I got through them as best I could. I wasn't interested in them. There were just two subjects that did interest me from my childhood—politics and history—and I read everything on those subjects that I could get my hands on. But I cared about nothing else."

His old friends do not altogether bear him out in his first assertion, as has been said.

"My recollection of Ed House as a college chum," said one man who makes his home now in New York city, "is that he always played the part of a quiet peacemaker in college rows, and established with us a high reputation for kindly diplomacy of a high order. He was Alpha Delta Phi, I remember, and a valued member of our chapter. Whenever there was a disturbance Ed would silently appear, and in a few minutes—

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

you wouldn't know exactly how it happened—the trouble would be all over. He had an exceptionally sweet disposition, and got on with everybody. As I recall, he was not the friend merely of a certain set of men, but of many fellows of a wide range of tastes and habits. And he was everlastingly exploring some book. One of my earliest remembrances of him is that of a quiet youth reading a ponderous volume of de Tocqueville's 'Democracy in America' as he walked along the street. That picture has stuck in my mind for forty years, I suppose. He liked especially to start discussions on current topics in the news, political matters in this country or abroad, analyze what had been done, and then start out to develop a plan which would have worked better.

" 'They ought not to have done that,' he would say. 'Now, this would be much better. Listen to me, now.' "

"And then he would launch into his own views, and he made us listen and debate them with him. He always liked to hear what other people thought."

As matters worked out, House did not go to Yale. Several of the boys who were with him at the Hopkins School switched at the last moment to Cornell, which was just beginning to loom important on the educational horizon, and House

WESTERN BOYHOOD TO EASTERN COLLEGE

switched with them. He entered college in 1877, with the class of 1881, but his father's death in 1880 compelled him to leave after he had completed less than three years of the course. He was not sorry to go, for he felt that he had gained everything that he desired from college, and he had the curiosity of youth to sample the world's portion for him.

One aspect of his school and college life, however, deserves more consideration. That was the friendships he made. Even at that early age House demonstrated his rare capacity for picking the right kind of men to know, which is one of the secrets of his amazing success. It was not that he was in any way snobbish. Personally he is, and was, the reverse of this. But he is interested in men who count and in measures that matter, and some uncanny intuition in his character enables him to identify the men who can work on his level.

Among his young friends were several whose families held prominent positions in Washington society. One, in particular, was a son of Senator Oliver Morton, of Indiana, who had been War Governor of his State. Senator Morton was an unusually interesting man. A cripple from paralysis during the last decade of his life, he managed to maintain his place in the political arena and exert a potent influence in national

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

affairs. House was especially favored in the friendship of such families as this one. Through them he gained an insight into the life of the national capital and the inner history of contemporary politics which was invaluable in assisting the development of his favorite hobby.

He had the entrée during his vacations and holidays into the most exclusive circles of the capital during the Grant and Hayes Administrations, and was frequently at the White House with other young people. He knew members of both the Hayes and Grant families, and occupied what might be called a stage-box seat to witness the celebrated Hayes-Tilden contest. At an age when most boys were interested mainly in sport or the petty incidents of their own lives, he was turning an attentive gaze upon the momentous events of a crucial period in the nation's evolution.

When he returned to Texas, summoned to his father's bedside, he was obliged to put aside the pursuit of his hobby for a time. There was a large estate to be settled, and he had to make up his mind seriously on the question of his future. As the youngest son, he was guided more or less by his brothers, who were from twelve to fifteen years older than himself, the children who had come in between having died before this. In the final settlement of the family business, three of

WESTERN BOYHOOD TO EASTERN COLLEGE

the sons, Thomas William, jr., John, and E. M., bought out the other heirs, Thomas William receiving the banking interests, John the sugar lands, and E. M. the cotton plantations.

It may be interesting for the people who are given to referring to Colonel House as "the Austin banker" to know that he is not and never has been a banker, in the accepted sense of the word, since he disposed of his shares in his father's bank. Neither was he a ranchman. If he was anything of that sort, he was an agriculturist, but he is very frank to admit that he was no more of an agriculturist than he could help being. In conducting his own affairs he employed the same method he used in national politics—he secured the best man available to take care of the details under his general supervision. You see, that left him plenty of leisure to play with politics.

CHAPTER III

TRUTH AND FICTION ABOUT HIS BUSINESS AFFAIRS

AFTER the settlement of his father's estate, Colonel House moved from Houston to Austin, partly for the sake of his health and partly to be closer to the Public Land Office of the State, in order that he might have better facilities for developing his holdings. His father left him about \$20,000 a year, and his income to-day is practically the same. He never craved wealth, as it is understood in the East. His principal concern was not to extend his property, but to conserve it. The active pursuit of cotton culture did not attract him, and he spent very little time on his land, especially after his marriage to Miss Loulie Hunter, of Austin, on August 4, 1881.

The statement will bear repetition that details have never interested him; he prefers to deal in the wider aspects of life, business, or politics.

Of his financial affairs he says:

"As a matter of fact, I have no more money to-day than my father left me. They say I am a banker. That is not true, and it never was.

ABOUT HIS BUSINESS AFFAIRS

I got out of my father's bank as soon as I could. At this moment I have about \$3,000 of stock in a bank in Austin and several thousands more in a bank in Houston. My bank stock holdings may aggregate \$15,000 to \$20,000. I doubt if they ever exceeded \$7,000 after I disposed of the interests my father left me, until quite recently, when I sold my home in Austin and took in payment for it \$12,500 of bank stock. Formerly all my money was invested in Texas cotton lands, but several years ago, when I found my time was becoming more and more occupied with the work of the Administration, I sold off most of my property, and the major portion of my income now comes from the interest on the notes I took in payment for my land.

"I know that men ask what I am getting out of my work. How foolish they are! They talk about my connection with Wall Street and the big banking houses. They seem to think I must get some sort of a shady rake-off for my services. It is as pitiful as it is despicable. Why, I can show you without fear the source of every penny of my income! The only bonds I buy are those of public-service corporations over which municipalities have control. The only Government bonds I own are a small block of Liberties, purchased for the same patriotic reason which animated millions of other Americans.

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

“If I wished to make money out of my position, I could do it easily, and without going to Wall Street. With my knowledge of what is happening and what is going to happen, I am in a far better position than the powers of Wall Street, themselves, to take advantage of market conditions. But I will have nothing to do with that sort of thing. If I wished to make money dishonestly, I could make plenty of it without Wall Street’s assistance. It is difficult for some people to understand that I have enough money for my wants. I have never accepted any salary or retainer from any Government, except that when I have gone abroad for the President on official missions my expenses have been paid.”

So much for the vexed question of the secret sources of the mysterious Colonel House’s millions!

There has been a great deal of tommy-rot written about Colonel House and his personal business, and this is as good a place as any to point the absurdity of the conventional write-up to which he has been subjected. The offenders have been legion—offenders because if they had gone to him frankly for information he would have given it to them. His aversion to publicity, previously mentioned, is not so pronounced that he fails to recognize the right of the public to know the main facts about him. At first, per-

ABOUT HIS BUSINESS AFFAIRS

haps, Colonel House did sidestep the publicity which was showered upon him. It was very novel and highly disagreeable. But he soon saw that his position was such as to require acceptance of the evil, and those who know him will testify that he stood to it like a man. In the meantime, however, scores of nimble writers had begun to turn the wheels of the rumor factory, and legends, myths, fairy-tales, improvisations, corruptions of true anecdotes, and plain lies were showered forth by the column. Colonel House has not caught up with them yet. He gave up, discouraged, several years ago.

It would be impossible to deal with all of these tootings of the journalistic trumpet, but we may select one "horrible example" in the most recent which has come to notice, an article entitled "Colonel House—The Man of Mystery" in December, 1917. From this we glean the following quotations, cited because they are typical of the mass of misstatements or exaggerations about Colonel House:

"He is a noiseless millionaire."

"House is a mental equilibrium, a gyroscope, a sounding-board, and an ambassador, *ex jure*, of the Presidential mental slant. He knows what the President's thought emanations are and how to feed them upon what they seek."

"No one has to 'see' Colonel House. No one

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

can 'see' him, because upon approach he would dive into a hole and pull the hole in after him if possible. He detests and fears publicity."

It is only fair to say that at the bottom of all of this preposterous farrago there is a gleam of pure metal:

"He gets nothing out of it except the satisfaction of honestly believing that he is serving his country and his party."

Even in this last quotation, however, there is a hint of a sneer, an inference that the man, at best, is a clever politician, working to promote party ends. People who know the real Colonel House will venture to differ with such an estimate of him. They consider him an astute politician, yes, the cleverest politician the country ever saw. But they do not stop with that. They believe that his greatest attribute is his statesmanship, his diplomacy in handling men and pushing measures. In these respects they consider him to rival the late John Hay.

The other statements quoted may be dismissed with a few words. Colonel House obviously is not a millionaire. He is not a servile echo to the President's "thought emanations." He is the President's principal counselor, probably the only man upon whose advice Woodrow Wilson leans with implicit trust, and any one who is acquainted with the upstanding character of Mr. Wilson, his

ABOUT HIS BUSINESS AFFAIRS

stern self-confidence, will appreciate what this means. A writer in the *New York Times* two years ago—Charles Willis Thompson—in one of the few accurate summaries of Colonel House's character and work, in convincing phrases branded as false the estimates of House as the messenger boy of the White House. Mr. Thompson's words will bear repetition:

"Of course, it is easy enough to turn a man into a mystery or a puzzle. All you have to do is to construct his character ideally from materials furnished by yourself, taking care that it shall be nothing like him. Then, when his actions are diametrically opposite to his character—that is, the character you have invented for him—these actions naturally become puzzling and the man becomes a mystery. It is then time for you to throw the blame on him, and ask why a man should be so confoundedly mysterious."

Mr. Thompson was writing anent the suggestion that Colonel House's trip to Europe in December, 1916, was for the purpose of adjusting certain alleged squabbles between the Ambassadors in London, Paris, Berlin, and Vienna, these gentlemen of years and dignity presumably having adopted the mental attitude of small boys who all wanted to bat at the same time in a game of "one-old-cat." Mr. Thompson remarked on this subject:

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

"Seldom has a single effort of the imagination, tossed off in an idle moment without thought, created so much havoc as this story that Colonel House was going abroad to settle some personal differences between Ambassadors. He was to arrange that one Ambassador could get his clothes from another city, that another should stop bossing a third, that another's wife could go shopping whenever she wanted to without molestation, and generally to play the part of maiden aunt to all the naughty children who represent this august Government in Europe. The State Department has been busy denying it ever since, and dispatches from abroad indicate that our Ambassadors are bewildered and infuriated. Yet its author invented it merely as an intellectual exercise, as a newspaper poet tries his hand at rondeaux and ballads to see what he can do.

"No one would have believed it if the totally imaginary character of Colonel House had not been built up beforehand. Since the people who wrote about him did not know anything about him, he had to be invented, and the imaginary Colonel House, the Colonel House who never existed, was one who might conceivably be sent abroad on nursery-maid errands like this. It is because of this that he is pictured, sometimes as a sort of private tutor sent hither and yon to

ABOUT HIS BUSINESS AFFAIRS

teach naughty Ambassadors how to behave, sometimes as a Sherlock Holmes snooping around Europe to find a clew to peace, sometimes as a kind of spotter finding out if any of our Ambassadors have failed to ring up when we deposited a Lusitania or Ancona note in the box. The real Colonel House would not touch the first or third of these jobs with a pair of tongs, and knows altogether too much about the situation to waste time with the second. The real Colonel House is not an errand-boy, nor a private detective, nor a governess; he is a man who has made history, and molded great affairs. He is a statesman, a politician, a policy-maker, and a Warwick."

There has been always a temptation to writers to compare Colonel House, as Mr. Thompson has done, with one of the famous rulers of kings of the past. He has been called another Talleyrand, a second Machiavelli. But there is nothing of the cunning medieval treachery of Machiavelli, the masterful ambition of Warwick, or the sly insidiousness of Talleyrand in his character. He is wholly modern in his outlook, one of the most progressive liberals in the world in these progressive times, set bitterly in principle against the old machinery of covered Government, an advocate of public diplomacy and direct legislation. Simply because he prefers for personal reasons to

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

work as much as possible without attracting attention to himself, people who do not know him jump to the conclusion that he is a believer in the old-world school of diplomacy. Nothing could be more erroneous. His interest from the start has been to strengthen the voters' grip on governmental machinery, and every piece of legislation, every policy, with which he has been connected, has been distinctly progressive in trend.

To go back over our track to the list of "horrible examples." To say that no one can "see" Colonel House is absurd. The remark is only surpassed in absurdity by the statement that he fears publicity. He is one of the most frequently "seen" men in public life. Anybody who has a legitimate excuse—and a good many more who have not—can see him, at least once. People who really have something to say can come as often as they please. Colonel House can never see too much of this kind of person. One of the reasons for his phenomenal grasp of public sentiment is his tremendously wide acquaintance—actually far wider than the President's, because it reaches through all strata of society and includes hundreds of men and women outside official circles. Off-hand, one may venture the assertion that there are few men or women of prominence in any walk of life in America to-day with whom Mr. House has not conversed at some time or

ABOUT HIS BUSINESS AFFAIRS

other. If the writer of the article mentioned above had undertaken the task of "seeing" Colonel House he would have found it surprisingly easy. Colonel House never flees any reasonable curiosity, although he works on a schedule which requires the use of every waking hour.

As for his fearing publicity—it is difficult to explain the source of this misunderstanding. What cause would he have for fearing publicity? He has nothing to conceal. His record is clean; he would have been in the scrap-heap long before this if his enemies, the men who, for one reason or another, he has been compelled to disappoint or offend, had been able to discover anything to tarnish his shield. It is true that he does not like publicity. But he understands the art of securing and holding publicity, one of the most difficult arts of the politician, to a degree that Colonel Roosevelt cannot exceed. Upon this gift of his has hinged the success of more than one Democratic policy, the issue of several momentous campaigns.

CHAPTER IV

STEADFAST REFUSAL OF PUBLIC OFFICE

ONE of the peculiarities of Colonel House which has stirred the ire of those who insist upon making a mystery out of him, is his steadfast refusal to accept public office. Republican campaign spell-binders—and Republican Senators on the floor of Congress—proclaim that behind this notable perversion of human nature must lie some questionable hidden purpose. It is unnatural for any man to refuse high office when it is within his grasp, they declare. If he shrinks from it he must have something to conceal, or else he must find it more to his advantage to operate without the incubus of an oath to the people's interest. So they decide that Colonel House is a lobbyist, or a demagogue, or an agent of secret powers, and they are satisfied.

Now there is as much of a mystery about House's refusal to accept office as there is about any other aspect of this many-sided man. He could have had any office in the gift of the people of Texas years ago, but he didn't want it. He could have any office in the gift of Woodrow

STEADFAST REFUSAL OF PUBLIC OFFICE

Wilson to-day—could have had it any time these last six years—but he doesn't want it. Public office has no charms for him, but wholly aside from his instinctive distaste for it, he knows that his health would not permit attention to the arduous routine duties of any office in Texas or in Washington. The injuries he suffered in his youth, which have already been described, undermined his resistance to heat, and it is simply impossible for him to pass the summer in the tepid climate below Mason and Dixon's Line. Even in the comparatively cool climate of the North he finds it difficult to undertake in summer as much work as he is capable of during the balance of the year.

"I never wanted office, anyway," he says, in describing his attitude toward the proposition. "But even if I did want it, I know that I should be signing my death-warrant to accept any office of worth, with its requirement of rigid hours and unremitting application. When I was a young man I used to think that I could do anything, ride and tramp in the sun like a negro farmhand. But I did it once too often, and I had something like a heatstroke. Since then I have not been able to stand the Texas summer climate. When I entered Texas politics this handicap stared me in the face, and I knew it would be foolish of me to consider accepting any State office, which

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

would have required my year-round presence in Austin.

"For the same reason I could not hold any Cabinet position which would demand my presence in Washington during the summer. The climate of Washington is almost as hard on me as the Texas climate during the hot months. The kind of work I am doing is very different. For one thing, I always have the knowledge at the back of my head that if I wanted to drop it, I could quit to-morrow. I am not bound down. For another thing, I am not held to regular hours, and I can work when, where, and how I choose, in New York, for instance, instead of Washington. I don't mean by this that I have ever seriously thought of dropping my work, but that after all, I have the comfortable feeling of being able to do so, if I ever felt the burden was too great."

But even if his health permitted him to accept office, it is to be doubted if he would do so. He does not care for that sort of thing. It is much more to his taste to work as he is doing. He is what you might call a consulting expert in politics, an adviser and assistant of office-holders. The only advantage he feels that he could gain by abandoning this rôle and taking office would be the winning of credit for measures for which he was responsible; but Colonel House's tempera-

STEADFAST REFUSAL OF PUBLIC OFFICE

ment is so adjusted that he would far rather plan out measures and allow some other man to receive the credit for putting them in operation than occupy the limelight himself. Results, not rewards, count with him. Applause means nothing to him. He is like his friend, Mr. Wilson, in his perfect readiness to ignore praise or blame if he thinks he is doing what is right and just.

"I am working for what I conceive to be right," he summed it up, "and if I contribute in any measure to the success of public affairs, I am satisfied with the accomplishment of my object."

Having set at rest the problem of why Colonel House does not seek the fierce light which beats upon the office-holder, we may turn to his first venture in practical politics. His interest in political matters, it will have been noted, began long before he was of voting age, and for the first ten years of his residence in Austin, after his marriage, his interest remained that of the ordinarily active and intelligent citizen. He was meeting men, studying legislative problems, keeping his ear to the ground to observe the underlying murmur of popular sentiment.

Texas had just passed through the humiliating period of reconstruction and was but recently reinstated to a position of complete independence. It was an era of rapid changes. The railroads were reaching out for more territory as fast as

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

the surveyors could plan the rights of way and the road gangs lay the ties and spike the rails. The frontier was receding westward, not willingly, to be sure, but in a sullen mood of stubborn opposition and lawlessness. Immigrants were flocking to the raw lands of this greatest of land domains in the Union. The cattleman and the sheep-raiser were stopping now and then in their bickers to eye uneasily the growing ranks of the farmers who were overflowing from the eastern counties. Texas was gradually developing from a frontier State, with all the seething restlessness of overnight growth, into a settled community of definite aims and purposes.

The period during which Colonel House exerted his influence upon the State's politics was the period of final evolution, and witnessed the establishment of the commonwealth on a basis of firm laws, which curbed the power of the corporations and made for popular control of the executive. Years before other States began to tackle the problem of restricting the mushroom growth of incorporated bodies, Texas had written on its statute books one of the most thorough railroad regulation acts which has ever been adopted in this country. It was in connection with this particular piece of legislation that Colonel House laid the foundations of his political prestige and began his extraordinary career

STEADFAST REFUSAL OF PUBLIC OFFICE

in State politics, which ended voluntarily only after he had elected four Governors in succession and at least one United States Senator.

In 1892 James A. Hogg, famous throughout the State as "the Great Commoner," had been Governor for two years, and was asking for re-nomination on an extremely radical platform, which called for the passage of an act creating a Railroad Commission, a law providing that no railroad should issue stocks or bonds upon its property in Texas, except with the consent of the Commission, after the valuation of its property by the Commission's engineers, and an act requiring the use of the Australian ballot in all towns of more than 10,000 population. Of course, in the ordinary course of events, nobody but a Democrat could be elected to any State office in Texas, and the only opposition to Hogg worth mentioning came from the conservative wing of his own party. George Clark was the candidate put forward by the conservatives, and he was strong enough to make matters very interesting for Governor Hogg. Clark did not think much of the Railroad Commission idea anyway, but he made the point that if there was to be such a body it should be elected by the people, and not appointed by the Chief Executive.

Colonel House did not know Governor Hogg very intimately at this time, but he had formed

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

definite views on the issues of the campaign, and his sympathies were entirely with the radicals. The quiet, soft-voiced young cotton planter of Austin had attracted the attention of many of the leaders of the party by his political sagacity as revealed in minor matters, and when the campaign for the Democratic nomination began he was asked to manage Hogg's interests. A campaign committee was appointed, a chairman elected, and ostensibly this body handled the fight. It was the form adopted by House in all his later campaigns, national as well as State, except the first Culberson campaign. But actually behind the campaign managers who spoke on the stump and issued statements to the newspapers sat a young man—he was then not thirty-five—who laid out the strategy of the main operations, directed the concentration or dispersal of forces, and suggested the catchwords and tactical dispositions.

His plans succeeded with magical smoothness, as Colonel House's plans generally do. He gives to political conceptions a deftness, a sureness in execution, which is really beautiful to the trained observer of the political field. He almost never makes mistakes. When he does they are instantly rectified, frequently even turned to advantage. There were probably less than fifty Democratic politicians in Texas in 1892 who

STEADFAST REFUSAL OF PUBLIC OFFICE

appreciated the share he had taken in Hogg's victory; but the fifty who did know were men whose opinions counted, and while they respected House's wishes to the extent of keeping his name out of the newspapers, they sang his praises *fortissimo* to Democratic leaders of other States. Thus was laid the basis for a reputation which ultimately enabled House to pick his own candidate for the Presidency in 1912, and impose his will upon a rather unwilling Democracy.

One of the candidates elected on the State ticket with Hogg in that campaign was a young man of about House's age, Charles A. Culberson, the new Attorney-General of Texas. He was a son of David Culberson, for many terms senior Democratic member of the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives, and Chairman of the Committee during Cleveland's Administrations, and one of the best-known lawyers in Texas. The son was destined to be even more distinguished, thanks in no small degree to the friendship and counsel of Colonel House.

The legislation demanded by Governor Hogg was speedily enacted by the Texas Legislature, and the responsibility for making it work then devolved upon Attorney-General Culberson's shoulders. The railroads were quick to realize the significance of the new measures, and, after waging a losing fight against them in the Legis-

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

lature, took up the battle anew in the courts. Every influence of a well-equipped lobby, supplied with unlimited funds, was brought to bear against the effective operation of the laws. The railroads of the country combined to make their attack as strong as possible. The best legal talent was employed to exploit the railroads' construction of the basic statutes to prove the regulatory powers conferred by the new laws illegal and unconstitutional. Step by step, Culberson fought on almost alone, through one court after another, until his final victory was won in the Supreme Court at Washington.

Colonel House watched Culberson's development under great responsibilities with more than a little interest. He also watched with concern the growth of Populism and free-silver sentiment in Texas, and the swinging of the radical Democrats over to these dangerous ideas. He was a radical himself, but he looked ahead and saw the pit that free silver would dig for the party in 1896. He decided to do what he could to check the influence of Populism in the State, and selected Culberson as the right man for the purpose. Despite Culberson's really sensational work as Attorney-General, he was not considered generally to be the man the party leaders would select for the Gubernatorial nomination.

The ostensible leaders were divided in opinion

STEADFAST REFUSAL OF PUBLIC OFFICE

on the claims to the nomination of the venerable Judge John H. Reagan, who had served the State in the United States Senate, and was the only surviving member of the Cabinet of Jefferson Davis, and Representative S. W. T. Lanham, who had been ten years in Congress, and was a former Confederate soldier. These men had substantial values as vote-getters, and were considerably senior to Culberson in political circles. Even people who looked upon Culberson as future Gubernatorial timber did not seriously think of him as a rival of two such old war-horses of the party.

For the first and only time in his political career, Colonel House departed from his fixed determination not to accept any formal office and took the chairmanship of Culberson's Campaign Committee. It is indicative of the Colonel's character that he has never quite gotten over a feeling of ruefulness at his weakness in yielding to importunate friends upon this occasion.

"For the life of me, I can't see why I did it," he said afterward.

One hazards a guess that it was simply one of those innumerable little kindlinesses of which Colonel House has been guilty, and which bring out in strong relief the sweet humanness of his disposition.

To give an idea of the amazement with which

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

Culberson's candidacy was greeted, here is what a Texas politician afterward confided to a writer for *Harper's Weekly*:

"I couldn't tell you now just how it happened. None of us had much thought about Charley Culberson, but first thing you know he turned up in the convention with enough delegates to nominate him twice over. Not that we hadn't a high opinion of Charley, for he was one of the best Attorney-Generals Texas ever had. But no one had any notion that he wanted to be Governor until he suddenly comes along as the Democratic candidate, which, of course, meant election. That's always the way with the Senator—no brass bands or loud shouting about what he's going to do. Just goes ahead and does it."

A very fair report of what occurred, too, except that the last two sentences are as applicable to Colonel House as they are to Culberson. The present senior Senator from Texas would be the first man to admit this.

It was in consequence of his services to Culberson that Colonel House acquired his title. One of the new Governor's first acts was to commission House a colonel on his staff. House at first declined, but when he saw he would hurt his friend's feelings, reluctantly accepted and undertook to order the uniform for his rank, as specified in the regulations of the adjutant-general of

STEADFAST REFUSAL OF PUBLIC OFFICE

the Texas militia. They tell a story in Austin that when the Colonel's trappings arrived from the tailor, he took one look at the heaps of gold lace, aiguillettes, epaulettes, braid, and burnished buttons, and then called in his negro coachman.

"Allen," he said, "take these—these clothes, and remove them."

That was the end of the Colonel's active service as an officer on the Governor's staff. The uniform for many years adorned the figure of his coachman on meeting nights of a certain lodge patronized by the Sons of Ham. But it was not so easy for House to discard the title, which he disliked almost as much as he did the uniform. Give the South a legitimate chance to call a man colonel, and he is doomed to the title for life. However, Mr.—beg pardon, Colonel—House makes the best of a bad business. Colonel he was, Colonel he is, and Colonel he will be to the end, no matter what he does, says, or thinks.

CHAPTER V

BEHIND THE SCENES IN HIS OWN STATE

CULBERSON made as good a Governor as he had Attorney-General. Shortly after he was inducted into office he gained a national reputation by prohibiting the holding of the Corbett-Fitzsimmons prize-fight on 'Texas soil. When the fight promoters, backed by all the gambling and professional sporting elements of the West and East, defied the Governor and told him there was no State law to prevent them from executing their purpose, Culberson grimly summoned the Legislature to a special session and compelled the passage of a law to serve his purpose.

In pursuance of his policy of State financial retrenchment, he insisted upon the limitation of the fees collected by county and district officers. His biggest fight, however, was to prevent the consolidation of the railroads in the State under the domination of the Southern Pacific, then directed by the masterful brain of the late Collis P. Huntington. This fight rivaled Culberson's contest to maintain the constitutionality of the

BEHIND THE SCENES IN HIS OWN STATE

railroad regulation acts, and it lasted almost as long. But with the help of Colonel House and the other progressive leaders in the State, he frustrated Huntington's attempt to secure the necessary legislation, and saved Texas from the fate of California.

It is the custom in Texas to renominate every Governor for a second two-year term—the first and only break in this tradition since reconstruction days having occurred in the case of the late Governor Ferguson, who was impeached and removed from office—and there was no question about the Democratic nomination being offered to Culberson. But this was in 1896, when the wave of Populism was sweeping the West, and for the first time a Democratic candidate for Governor of Texas was confronted with an actual contest on election day, the Populist State Committee having effected a fusion with the Republicans, the Republicans supporting the Populist State ticket in return for the Populist electoral votes.

Most of the Populist strength was recruited from the ranks of the radical wing of the Democratic party, and the contest was close and exciting. Colonel House steered the Culberson campaign from his seat behind the scenes. He was strongly opposed to the whole Populist program, and especially to free silver, but he was

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

wise enough to see the strength of the hysteric frenzy which was disrupting the party, and he subscribed to a compromise endorsement of the free silver issue by the regular Democracy. He was under no illusions about this issue, and he was convinced it was the fatal dose of poison which would kill the party's chance of national success. But he was and is by conviction a party man, even though he does not advise regularity on the part of every voter.

"I didn't think Bryan could win on the free silver issue," he describes his feelings. "But at the same time I did not think it was fair for me to refuse to play with Bryan's crowd, just because they had got what they wanted, which happened to be what I did not want them to get. I have always been a worker for the party, and perhaps as much for that reason as any other I have always been regular. I can't conceive myself voting anything but a Democratic ticket. But that does not alter my conviction that the salvation of the country is the great body of independent voters. Where would we be if every man rigidly voted either a Republican or a Democratic ticket? If we had no silent body ready to curb abuses of power, no matter what party was responsible for the evil? No, as I say, I am regular, because, taking part as I do in the direction of the party's affairs, it is only right for

BEHIND THE SCENES IN HIS OWN STATE

me to abide by the party's decisions, its mistakes as well as its achievements. But the independent voter has my admiration and respect. He is the highest type of good citizen."

A contemporary account of that campaign remarks:

"Governor Culberson took the stump, sent a trusted lieutenant to Democratic Headquarters, and gave personal attention to the campaign."

That was the contemporary way of saying that Colonel House was directing his third Gubernatorial campaign. The Colonel kept his trusty ear close to earth, sensed the movement and pace of the groundswell, and handled his forces accordingly. Culberson was reelected by nearly 60,000 majority.

During Culberson's second term the fight against the interests, the fight for government for the people, was carried forward with conspicuous success. The shell-backs of the old régime, the local reactionaries, and predatory intermediaries between the corporations and the Legislature were backed up against a stone wall. They died hard, but finally the breath was pretty well squeezed out of them.

In the course of the reorganization of the party the question arose of a successor to Senator Roger Q. Mills, who had served continuously in Congress since 1873, and in the Senate since

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

1892, and who had announced his retirement. Certain political leaders of the State chose as their candidate Judge Reagan, who, as has been said, was Postmaster-General in Jefferson Davis's Confederate Cabinet.

Reagan was one of the strongest and ablest men in the State. During his career in the United States Senate—he had been Mills's predecessor in the upper chamber—he had gained a national reputation by his share in fathering the Interstate Commerce Commission law, and he had earned the affection and regard of the people of Texas by resigning his seat to accept from Governor Hogg the Chairmanship of the State's first Railroad Commission, in the erection of which he was deeply interested. Now that the Commission was established and in operation, it was suggested that he be given the opportunity to resume his Senatorial honors.

But while Colonel House had much respect for Judge Reagan's ability and character, he thought that it was advisable in the circumstances to use new blood. He wished to see Texas represented in Congress by a Senator who would respond to the new forces he knew to be working deep down underneath the surface of affairs, and he selected Culberson as the man who could be relied upon to work for progressive liberalism in Government.

BEHIND THE SCENES IN HIS OWN STATE

This was in 1898, at the end of Culberson's second term, and it is needless to say that the Governor was chosen and duly entered the Senate in December. He has been one of the most successful legislators of the group championed by Colonel House, and has served with dignity and distinction. At this day he is chairman of the Judiciary Committee of the Upper House, as his father was Chairman of the same Committee in the House of Representatives.

Culberson's election to the Senate is notable in many ways, but the outstanding incident, considering the event in perspective, was the presence of Colonel House in the galleries of the Hall of the Legislature in the State Capitol, the first and only time he ever entered the Legislative Chamber. The ordinary office holders and legislators never met him, were ignorant of his power.—with the result that he was not pestered for his assistance in all sorts of schemes and projects, nefarious and absurd. He carries out the same principle in his relation to the national Administration. It is probable that he has not visited the Capitol more than three times since Wilson came to Washington, and those times were the occasions of the President's addresses to Congress on international affairs.

While Colonel House was helping Governor Culberson get elected to the Senate, he was also

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

steering the campaign of Culberson's successor in the Governorship, and a very interesting situation developed in this connection. In every one of House's Texas campaigns he found that he had to oppose the man he had last made Governor, who always had plans calling for a successor whom Colonel House could not approve.

The retiring Governor would want to make use of the influences which had been mustered to elect him for the purpose of nominating a man chosen by and acceptable to himself. Then Colonel House would have to go to work and tear down the machine he had built up, erecting in its stead a brand-new campaign structure. The trouble was that there had grown up in Texas one of those peculiar political customs, which are phenomena of American public life, giving to the Attorney-General the unwritten right of succession to the Governorship. House thought that this was a wrong idea, a fallacious theory crippling the initiative of the voters and capable of being turned to bad account by unscrupulous politicians, who might secure control of the nominating machinery. He set his face firmly against it, and in the end destroyed it.

It is true that one of the candidates for the Democratic nomination for Governor this year happens to be the present Attorney-General, but if he is elected he will be the first Attorney-Gen-

BEHIND THE SCENES IN HIS OWN STATE

eral to become Governor since Colonel House broke the succession, and there can be no harm in occasional instances of promoting a man who has done well as the State's law officer. The objection Colonel House had was that, under the custom existing when he entered State politics, every Governor of Texas must have been Attorney-General of Texas, and a man who had not been Attorney-General, no matter what his qualifications, could not be elected. Colonel House is just as strong in his belief that the right man ought to be nominated, even if he does happen to be the Attorney-General, as he is in his contention that it is not necessary for the right man to be or have been Attorney-General.

In the State campaign of 1898, Governor Culberson and his friends backed Attorney-General Crane for the nomination. Both Culberson and his predecessor, Hogg, had served as Attorney-General, and Culberson was only carrying on the tradition.

"Crane was an admirable man and had been a most efficient Attorney-General," said Colonel House in describing the incident. "I have no doubt he would have made a good Governor. But I considered that the principle at stake was bigger than any question of the man's individual fitness. I thought it was time to destroy the precedent which dictated his nomination."

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

The man Colonel House picked as his candidate for the nomination—as usual without any unnecessary fuss and feathers—was Representative Joseph D. Sayers, a Confederate veteran, who had been fourteen years in Congress, and at that time was ranking minority member of the Appropriations Committee, of which he had been chairman during Cleveland's Administration. The Spanish-American War was then occupying the attention of the national legislators, and it was impossible for Sayers to leave Washington to participate in his own campaign. But Colonel House rallied his forces and secured L. L. Foster, who had been a member of the Railroad Commission under Governor Hogg, to act as chairman of Sayers's campaign committee. It seemed like a forlorn hope, even to the most devoted supporters of Colonel House.

That was a real battle. Only two members of the Culberson Administration followed Colonel House in the fight against Crane. Practically all the men who had supported him in previous campaigns were against him. He had to begin at the beginning and build up a brand-new organization. Sayers never made a speech in his own behalf, never even entered the State before election. Every bit of campaigning was done for him. And despite the opposition of the strongest men in the party, the men who held the control

BEHIND THE SCENES IN HIS OWN STATE

of the patronage and had the prestige of their offices behind them, he was nominated.

How? Well, there is a certain point beyond which Colonel House will not reveal the inner secrets of his strategy. He says it was organization that turned the trick, organization and a candidate, who, after all, had a large personal following and was loved and respected.

"Politics is largely a question of organization," Colonel House sums it up. "You've got to have a good, clean fellow to put before the voters. After that it is organization."

The brand of organization that nominated Sayers is still talked about with awe whenever Texas politicians foregather. In fact, that particular campaign is held up to young politicians as a model, an ideal of organization to be striven for, if not attained. It is illuminating to read in the New York *Commercial* of December 6, 1902, in a sketch of Governor Sayers:

"The business elements of the State determined to bring about a change. They made up their minds that the State had been in control of the politicians long enough and that it was time that they should interest themselves in securing the election of a Governor who would give attention to the industrial and general business development of the State. Major Sayers was picked upon as the man who could bring this about."

CHAPTER VI

WATCHING EVENTS AND BIDDING HIS TIME

AFTER the Sayers campaign, and the election of Governor Culberson to the Senate, Texas politics palled on Colonel House. He felt that he had gotten out of it about all that he could. His main interest since youth had been primarily in national affairs, and even more than that in international relations, the curious cross-currents stirred by age-old ethnical repressions and ideals, the balance of power sought by conflicting national groups, the effects of arbitrary territorial allotments in times past, and the subtle aggressive action of opposing trade interests. He had entered State politics, in the first place, because he conceived it to afford a good opportunity for trying out certain theories which he had been turning over in his brain, and secondly, because at the time he saw no other field in which he could exploit his talents. Now, he had obtained what he sought. He had tested himself in the laboratory and learned that it was possible to achieve the ends he had in view.

But it was not so easy for him to retire as per-

WATCHING EVENTS AND BIDDING HIS TIME

haps he imagined. He had won a remarkable place for himself in the political counsels of the State, a place such as no man had ever occupied in any commonwealth. And although he took less and less interest in the actual operations of government—partly, it is true, because, thanks to his past efforts, the Government ran smoothly and functioned in accordance with his ideas—it was some years before he could dis sever himself from the active supervision of the party's principal campaigns.

In 1900 Governor Sayers was nominated for a second term, with no opposition worth speaking of, and in 1902 Colonel House selected to succeed him Samuel W. T. Lanham, one of the State's Representatives in Congress, who had been a claimant for the nomination against Culberson in 1894. Lanham, it will be remembered, was a Confederate veteran, and by reason of his long service in Congress, a strong candidate.

With House's support and guiding hand on the campaign, his nomination and election were easily assured. Such opponents as he had retired from the field before the convention met, and he was named by acclamation. In 1904 Governor Lanham was renominated, in accordance with the precedent previously alluded to, and Colonel House made up his mind definitely to quit active participation in State politics.

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

The motive which actuated him in this resolve was a feeling, which had been growing more and more pronounced for several years, that it was wrong for any one man to occupy any longer a position of domination over political issues in the State. He believed that it could not have a healthy effect, if prolonged. He had destroyed, it will be recalled, the custom of regarding the Attorney-General of Texas as the successor of the retiring Governor, because it had savored too strongly of a semi-dynastic principle and had made possible the continued control of the executive office by any group of men who might saddle themselves upon the electorate. Now he decided to eliminate himself, lest he should create a precedent for unlimited direction of the Democratic party's political machinery.

The disinterestedness which prompted this action is all the more striking because Colonel House's work in Texas had made him known to practically all the national leaders of the party. Contrary to the general supposition, current ever since his name became a household word by reason of his friendship with Woodrow Wilson, he was not an unknown quantity to Mr. Wilson or to the President's friends and advisers. Colonel House had a national reputation so long ago as 1900, but it was a reputation known only to the men who make it their business to be conversant

WATCHING EVENTS AND BIDDING HIS TIME

with the inner happenings of the political world.

He could have had a share in the management of Bryan's campaign in 1900 and of Alton B. Parker's campaign in 1904—of course, on the usual understanding, stipulated for by him, that his work was to be done in confidence, the publicity and credit for whatever was accomplished being allotted to the actual chairman. But not even upon such terms could Colonel House be tempted to embark upon campaigns which he knew to be hopeless for the party. He supported and voted for both Bryan and Parker; he acquiesced in—if he did not approve—the sending by Texas of Free Silver delegations to the national conventions in 1896 and 1900, although he did not believe in the Free Silver heresy. But the personalities and aims of the two men did not appeal to him. In a word, he did not feel that he could work with them with the harmony and efficiency which were his standard for accomplishing results.

Mr. Bryan Colonel House knew well at this time. They first met in Houston, Texas, in 1897, when Bryan was paying a short visit to that city. Later, in the winter of 1898-1899, the health of Mr. Bryan's daughter was very delicate and physicians recommended a sojourn in the South. By accident Mr. Bryan rented the house in Austin next to Colonel House's. There was only a

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

hedge-row between the two properties, and naturally the families became intimate. Colonel House had always cherished a deep admiration for the fine qualities, the free liberalism and progressiveness, of Mr. Bryan's character. They were very close friends, for, fundamentally, they had much in common. As a rule the ends they strove for were the same, although their methods of approach frequently differed.

But the bare fact is that Colonel House's frequent intercourse with the national leader of the Democratic party served to reinforce the conviction previously formed that Mr. Bryan was not the long-awaited chieftain who would respond to the rising murmur of the times and lead the party to fresh victories. For this reason Colonel House kept out of the national campaigns of 1900 and 1908. In 1904 he abstained from taking part because he thought that Parker was the wrong man to be nominated, a man who did not reflect popular tendencies, who was as exclusively the representative of the conservative Eastern branch of the party as Bryan was of the Western radicals. One of Colonel House's traits is his ability to outwait almost any one in creation. He can bide his time like an Indian, and he never moves until he is convinced that to move is the best policy. So he sat tight in 1900, 1904, and 1908.

WATCHING EVENTS AND BIDDING HIS TIME

One has a feeling that it must have been hard work, even for him. He had been growing in stature until he was become a national figure behind the scenes. The one thing that absorbed him most, as business, hobby, avocation, and pleasure, was politics, high politics, dealing with big issues, big men and big events. Yet for twelve years after he was ready to take the part he had cast himself for he was obliged to sit back and wait until the right man came along—a man whose qualifications should be only readiness to accept unselfish friendship and advice, for that was all Colonel House wanted to do. It seems, strange, in a way, that a man who has no selfish ends to serve should have difficulty in finding another man who would be willing to accept of that service and not regard the offering with jealous eyes. But Colonel House spent twelve years in finding such a man. It is rather a commentary upon human nature—at least the kind of human nature which is warped and twisted by the passions and cramping ambitions of politics.

He occupied himself in various ways during those years of waiting, and all of the time he was growing and learning, fitting himself for the rôle he was to play upon the stage of the world. It is safe to say that he had no real conception of the importance of the part that Fate had reserved for him, although he was looking ahead and studying

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

the canker sores of mankind, watching them fester and spread. He was an omnivorous reader of books that dealt with politics, social questions, economics, philosophy, national relations, and the moot questions of international interest. Years before Americans realized the importance of the underlying discontent of the Southern Slavs and the restlessness of the Czecho-Slavs under Austria's rule, he had become a close student of the problem of submerged nationalities.

Behind all his studies was the idea of working out such a distribution of the earth's surface as would make civilization safe from war. Colonel House had known the brutal savagery of the old frontier, and he appreciated far more than most of the men of his generation the torments of lust and crime and horrid violence which a world war would let loose upon the nations. He was always thinking of this question, when he and his family were at home in Austin during the winters and on their trips to the North or to Europe in the summers. He was of those Americans who had what was called "the going-abroad habit." He liked to travel, liked to examine strange countries and peoples, familiarize himself with their lives and interests.

One derives amusement from the frequent assertions in Congress or on the stump that the President had picked out a "raw, unlettered

WATCHING EVENTS AND BIDDING HIS TIME

Texas ranchman to represent him at the courts of Europe." There are few scholars of the Eastern States, few great international lawyers of the Eastern bar, who have as wide a grasp of world affairs as Colonel House—if for no other reason than because he has spent vastly more time in investigating this special field than almost any other man in the country. He was at home in every European capital, and had traveled extensively over the Continent, before the President sent him abroad the first time. More than that, in the course of his travels Colonel House had met many of the leaders of European thought and opinion, and he was by no means the stranger to foreign intellectuals that he has been represented.

The House home in Austin was the gathering place of the informed society of the Texas capital. Colonel House's favorite relaxation is a little dinner party of congenial men. He is never so happy as when sitting by his own fireside chatting with a few friends, business men, politicians, or followers of the professions. So the House dinners were one of the attractions of Austin society in the years before his identification with the Administration at Washington obliged him to spend the whole year in the North. His personal business required very little attention, and the short visits to his tiny office in a building near

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

the State Capitol—the sign on the door was merely a visiting-card pasted on—left him plenty of leisure.

When he dropped State politics he occupied himself in several ways during the winter months. He took great interest in the University of Texas, which had been established about the time he went to Cornell, and exerted much influence in its affairs. His brother-in-law, Sidney Edward Mezes, now president of the College of the City of New York, who married, in 1896, Miss Anna O. Hunter, a sister of Mrs. House, was elected Dean of the University in 1902. One of the Governors of Texas offered to make Colonel House a Regent of the University, but he declined. It was typical of him that he should prefer to render such assistance as he could under the cover of anonymity.

Another undertaking which afforded him much fun and relaxation was the building of the Trinity & Brazos Valley Railway, a ninety-mile line through the cotton country near Austin. He was chairman of the executive committee and a director, and like all the other directors, knew nothing about railroad matters when he went into the project, which was financed by some Boston people. His connection with this road and his short service on the board of the Equitable Trust Company of New York constitute the sole rea-

WATCHING EVENTS AND BIDDING HIS TIME

sons for dubbing him a "director and corporation magnate and a promoter of large business interests." He resigned from the Equitable Trust Company because he found that he never had opportunity to attend any of the directors' meetings, and it was one of his theories that a director of a corporation is elected to direct. This is a theory which has not yet been adopted universally.

The Trinity & Brazos Valley was more of a recreation than a serious business proposition, but the promoters did not lose in the long run. The Texas railroads had earned a bad name with farmers and the general public by their attitude toward all claims made against them. The roads invariably refused to pay claims, and fought any effort to collect, with the idea that they could make it cost so much to sue that the claimant would lose his courage and drop out before all the legal resources of delay had been exhausted. Colonel House and his friends decided that the cardinal point of their policy should be fairness to the traveling public and land-owners along the right-of-way. They posted signs at all stations telling people who thought they had claims not to waste time with a lawyer, but to go straight to the railroad and have it settled.

"We had a lot of fun with that little road," says Colonel House, "and it taught me a good

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

deal about railroading. I'll never forget how we enjoyed all the questions that arose, the fun we had naming the stations and making up timetables, and so forth. It was new to all of us. But we sold it at a substantial profit to B. F. Yoakum and Edwin Hawley, who later disposed of it to the Denver & Rio Grande, by whom it is still operated. We did it to prove that a railroad could be built and run and make money and still be fair to the people."

CHAPTER VII

PRESIDENTIAL POSSIBILITY

Defeat of Mr. Bryan by Mr. Taft in the election of 1908 and the reaction of the Taft Administration convinced Colonel House that the opportunity he had been waiting twelve years for was at hand. He was not under any illusions about the difficulties to be surmounted in electing any Democrat to the Presidency; but he considered that the time had come when Bryan must concede the right of some other worthy man to the nomination, while the party's experience with Parker had shown that although a standard-bearer less radical than the Peerless Leader might be desirable, still, nothing could be gained by out-doing the Republicans in the extreme of conservatism.

His judgment of the situation was that the right man to head the ticket in 1912 must be, first of all, from the East, because, in order to win victory, the party must make substantial inroads upon the densely populated industrial States, which had been giving uniform Republican majorities since the advent of Bryan

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

and the free silver issue—now peacefully dead and lowly laid in a grave dug deep and sealed with a tombstone weighted by the intelligent condemnation of Democrats, North and South, East and West.

Secondly, Colonel House held that a Democratic candidate who had any chance of winning the next election must be of proved progressive timber and established in advance in the minds of the voters as a liberal unidentified with Big Business or corporation activities. Preferably, he should not be a Congressman. It was essential that he should be known in the South and West. These requirements ruled out most of the suggestions for the nomination whose names even so early as this were being aired in print by professional political forecasters.

Thirdly—and here was the rub—Colonel House fully appreciated that no Democrat could stand a chance of getting the nomination in the National Convention unless he had the backing of Mr. Bryan. In other words, whoever was chosen as the party's nominee must be acceptable to Mr. Bryan, who, despite his three defeats and the regrettable memories of Populism, still ranked as the most powerful individual in the party, the idol of considerable sections of the Union, and a man who, where he could not force himself upon the delegates, at the least, could be assured of suf-

GAYNOR AS A PRESIDENTIAL POSSIBILITY

ficient support to thwart the nomination of a candidate he deemed unsatisfactory or below the standard he had set.

It will readily be understood that this third requirement narrowed Colonel House's choice well-nigh to the vanishing point. For Mr. Bryan's unfailing test of a man's fitness was the strength of that man's support in 1896, 1900, and 1908. More than one Eastern Democrat of national stature, progressive, untainted by corporate connections, fell by the wayside when put to the test of party regularity, as interpreted by Mr. Bryan.

Colonel House was not discouraged, however, and with his usual calm aplomb surveyed the available stock of Eastern Democrats. Like many other acute political observers, his attention was attracted early in 1910 by the personality of the late William J. Gaynor, who had been elected Mayor of New York in the preceding November. Mayor Gaynor had been a Justice of the State Supreme Court, sitting in Brooklyn, for many years, and had won a wide reputation as a jurist. His first notable exploit in public life as a young man was the smashing of the John Y. McKane gang, which had wielded immense power in Brooklyn, and he lent his support to later attacks upon machine corruption. He was nominated by Tammany, but made his campaign for

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

the mayoralty on the assertion that the nomination had come to him unsought and that he was independent of Tammany control. He was the only member of the Tammany ticket to be elected.

Mayor Gaynor brought to his office a most picturesque personality, an aggressive independence, a keen knowledge of governmental matters, and a disregard for precedents. He was in hot water from the start of his term, but he always handled himself with sang-froid, and for all the testiness of his disposition succeeded in winning the love and respect of cynical New Yorkers as have few other Mayors of the country's largest city. His sympathy with the poor and the oppressed, his opposition to police brutality, and his exceedingly human letters and public statements soon made him good newspaper copy in the South and West.

Best of all, for Colonel House's purpose, Gaynor was acceptable to Bryan. At the National Democratic Convention in Denver in 1908 Bryan had wanted him as running-mate on the Presidential ticket, but this plan was frustrated by certain delegates who presented newspaper clippings purporting to show that Gaynor had made attacks upon the Roman Catholic Church, and before the charge could be disproved Bryan was argued into an agreement to abandon Gaynor. When Gaynor began to assume possibilities as a Presidential candidate to Colonel House in 1910,

GAYNOR AS A PRESIDENTIAL POSSIBILITY

the Colonel took pains to sound Bryan and learned that the Mayor of New York was still acceptable to the party's leader.

But it is Colonel House's way to move cautiously. He would not lend his support and influence to any man he did not know. So when he came North in the early summer of 1910 he went to the late James Creelman, then president of the Municipal Service Commission, who was the man he knew who also happened to be most intimate with Mayor Gaynor. At Colonel House's request Mr. Creelman arranged an appointment with the Mayor and a private room was secured at the Lotos Club. Only the three men were present, and the whole evening was spent in discussion, Colonel House, as is his custom, seeking out Gaynor's hobbies, sounding the capacities of his mind, leading him skillfully to talk about everything which interested him.

Gaynor made an excellent impression. He was at his best. The brusqueness which often characterized his manner was entirely absent. He talked pleasantly and deferentially, and showed all the really wonderful qualities of his intellect.

"He was a most remarkable man," said Colonel House in describing the interview. "I have rarely met his equal for depth of learning in political and governmental problems."

Colonel House was much pleased with his pros-

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

pective candidate, and he suggested to the Mayor that it would be advisable for him to enter the race for the Democratic nomination for the Governorship of New York in the election to be held in the approaching November. There was practically no doubt of his ability to get the nomination, and he would have made a much stronger candidate than John A. Dix, who ultimately was nominated by the Democrats and won. Colonel House pointed out to Mayor Gaynor that he could rely upon more substantial Democratic support in the Presidential contest of 1912, if he gave a demonstration as a vote-getter in a State election.

Mayor Gaynor's reply to all such arguments was that it was a bigger job to be Mayor of New York city than to be Governor of New York State, and that he did not wish to resign what he considered a first-class office for one of inferior importance. He was supported in this stand by Mr. Bryan. Colonel House was quite willing to admit that, on the merits of the case, the Mayoralty of New York city was a bigger undertaking than the Governorship of New York State, but he also told the Mayor that this was not understood by people in other parts of the country, who refused to believe that the Mayor of any city could be more important than the Governor of his State. Colonel House argued further that so far Mr. Gaynor had figured but once in an



THE APARTMENT AT NO. 115 EAST 53RD STREET, NEW
YORK CITY, "THE AMERICAN, NO. 10 DOWNING STREET,"
WHERE COLONEL HOUSE RESIDES

GAYNOR AS A PRESIDENTIAL POSSIBILITY

important election, and that, while he was becoming a national figure, he would leap into much greater prominence if he allowed himself to be elected Governor of New York. It was next to impossible, Colonel House asserted, to jump a man from the Mayor's chair to the White House. Certainly, it had never been done in the past.

But Gaynor demonstrated on this point all the mulish obstinacy which was one of his outstanding traits. He refused to yield his ground, and for the first time Colonel House began to doubt his value as Presidential timber. Gaynor might have been dropped then and there, if matters had not taken a new turn, with the shooting of the Mayor by John J. Gallagher, a discharged city employee, on August 9, 1910, as he was standing on the deck of the liner Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse, bidding good-by to a group of friends prior to his departure for a vacation in Europe. The bullet struck the Mayor in the throat, and for a while his life was despaired of. But the atrociousness of the assault, as well as the phlegmatic courage with which Gaynor withstood the ordeal of pain, instantly made him an object of national interest to an extraordinary degree.

"He was shot into the Governorship," Colonel House once put it.

Indeed, so important did Colonel House estimate the effect of the attempted assassination

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

upon Gaynor's availability that he renewed his attempts to persuade the Mayor to enter the Gubernatorial contest. But Gaynor still persisted in the view that he could not augment his political capital by going to Albany.

Finding that it was no use to press this issue, Colonel House then cast about for another means to make Gaynor better known outside New York. As a preliminary step, he decided to introduce the Mayor to the voters of Texas, and the method he adopted was the same one by which he introduced to his home State another gentleman a year later—but that is also another story.

It was learned that the idea of a trip to Texas was agreeable to Mayor Gaynor, and a few days later Colonel House, accompanied by Senator Culberson and Col. R. M. Johnstone, afterward Senator from Texas, called at the City Hall and formally suggested that the Mayor be invited to deliver an address at the annual State Fair, which is held in Dallas. It was likewise suggested by Colonel House that it might be a good thing to have the Texas Legislature, which would be in session, extend to the Mayor an invitation to address the two houses in joint assembly.

The Mayor was very courteous to his visitors, and seemed most enthusiastic about their efforts in his behalf. He agreed to both suggestions, accepted the definite invitation to attend the State

GAYNOR AS A PRESIDENTIAL POSSIBILITY

Fair, and expressed his pleasure at the prospect of addressing the State Legislature. He again made an excellent impression.

How the sequel happened is a mystery. Nothing was heard from Gaynor for some days, and finally a newspaper editor in Texas—not a well-known man—sent the Mayor a telegram asking him if he was really coming. Gaynor wired back that it was the first he had heard of the matter—in fact, that he knew nothing about it. Only those who came in close contact with the eccentric mental processes of Gaynor's really brilliant mind can conceive how such an amazing act of discourtesy could be possible. And it is difficult for them to comprehend the quirk of his brain that fathered the snub which may well have cost him the Presidency.

For that telegram to an obscure Texas newspaper editor finished Gaynor's chances, not only in Texas, but in national politics. Colonel House and his friends had first doubted Gaynor's fitness when he refused their advice to run for Governor. They regarded this as an error in political judgment. But they admitted that any man may make occasional errors in judgment, and they were willing to believe that a man of large soul could afford to disdain conventional advantages. The second blunder, however, convinced Colonel House that, whatever might be said for

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

Gaynor's intellectual greatness, he was a man of little, if any, political sense—and therefore hopeless as a Presidential possibility.

The incident put Colonel House in a very uncomfortable position. He had been responsible for getting the State Legislature to pass the resolutions inviting Gaynor to address the members, and the legislators were naturally inclined to feel peevish at the way in which they had been treated. Colonel House had to admit that he had been mistaken in his man, and Gaynor's name was wiped off the slate of Presidential possibilities.

That was probably the worst mistake that Colonel House ever made, and it served to convince him that his policy of putting prospective candidates over the jumps until they had demonstrated their paces was the only safe one.

"Judging men you don't know is just like walking through a strange country," he says. "Every rolling swell in the land you see ahead of you looks more inviting than the hill you are standing on. But when you get to the next elevation, you find the view just the same—in fact, as like as not you will be disappointed because it is no better. I have found that if you allow yourself to become enthusiastic about a man you don't know, when you do come to know him he will seem disappointing. And that is your fault as much as his."

CHAPTER VIII

RISE OF WILSON'S PRESIDENTIAL STAR

JUST about the time Mayor Gaynor's name was erased from the slate of Presidential possibilities another and brighter star appeared on the Democratic political horizon. Woodrow Wilson was elected Governor of New Jersey—a solidly Republican State since the Free Silver issue had disrupted the Democratic party—in November, 1910, by a majority of 49,000 votes over Vivian M. Lewis, the Republican candidate. Wilson had been elected president of Princeton University in 1902, and in the following years had built up a reputation as one of the most influential educators in the country. His policy at Princeton had been markedly liberal, so much so, indeed, that he was repeatedly brought into contact with the rockbound conservatism of this most conservative of American universities. He had also earned repute as an historian, his studies of American government particularly having been adjudged standard works in their field. He came to the Governorship with no previous practical experience as a politician, but with a fund of

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

theoretical knowledge and an abundance of Scotch-Irish self-reliance. He made history from the first day he entered the State Capitol at Trenton.

Probably few Gubernatorial elections ever attracted more national interest than Wilson's. It was a novel sight for the United States—a college president, a man of books, a student and theorist, entering the realm of the politician, where the lawyer and the business man had reigned so long. Predictions of "The Doctor's" failure were general in Republican newspapers, and, to say the truth, the bulk of the professional Democratic politicians regarded his advent in their midst with a sense of uneasiness, amounting in many cases to resentment. In his campaign he based his appeal for votes on promises of radical legislation to curb the powers of the political rings and corporation interests. He repudiated the machine politicians of the State, Democratic as well as Republican. He talked straight to the people.

Before very many weeks had passed Colonel House was reading items in the daily news, even in far-away Texas, about the doings of this extraordinary man Wilson. Political observers in the North wrote to him, after their wont from time to time, and they, too, reported the stir which had been created by the independent attitude and progressive doctrines of this man of

RISE OF WILSON'S PRESIDENTIAL STAR

theories. Colonel House became interested in the newcomer. After the Gaynor disappointment he had cast his eye over the remaining Presidential timber that was available according to his three standards, and the prospect was not one to stimulate hope. When he sought hope he concentrated his gaze upon events in Washington, where the Taft Administration was sitting tight on the lid to hold down the forces of progress.

Governor Wilson's first act to draw attention to himself was his insistence that the Democratic Legislature that had been elected along with him should carry out the popular will, as expressed in a referendum to the voters in the November campaign, under the Senatorial Preferential act, for the election of James E. Martine as United States Senator. The Legislature wished to disregard this popular behest and elect instead ex-Senator James Smith, one of the two Democratic bosses against whom the new Governor had set his face relentlessly. In the resulting controversy Governor Wilson won, and so established the precedent for the string of victories awaiting him in subsequent years.

The importance of his stand on the question of the election of a Senator lay in the impetus it gave to the movement for an amendment to the Federal Constitution providing for the election

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

of United States Senators by popular vote, a movement which was to gain increased headway after Wilson's election to the Presidency. His fight on this issue attracted notice in every part of the country, and especially in the Western States, where a tendency towards radical legislation to make easier the expression of the popular will had been growing with rapid strides.

Other legislation which served to stamp Governor Wilson as a progressive in his sympathies included the famous "Seven Sisters" law to enforce the personal responsibility of individuals for unlawful acts of corporations and forbidding interlocking directorates; a law to punish corrupt practices at elections; a law making possible the adoption of government by commission by cities which chose to remodel their existing municipalities; a Direct Primary law, affecting the election of all officeholders from Governor to constable, and a law for the establishment of jury commissions to take away from the sheriffs their control of the courts through the use of juries of their own drawing.

Colonel House is the last person to claim for himself the honor of being "the first Wilson man." Who that wiseacre was is a question which in all probability will never be settled. Certainly, whoever laid claim to the honor would draw down upon himself a horde of indignant

RISE OF WILSON'S PRESIDENTIAL STAR

counterclaimants. But it is safe to say that the actual launching of the Wilson Presidential boom was done by a little group of Princeton alumni, the leader of whom was William F. McCombs, chairman of the Democratic National Committee in the 1912 campaign. Col. George Harvey, editor of *Harper's Weekly*, while not a member of this group, early raised the Wilson standard—a fact too firmly fixed by one of the few regrettable incidents of the campaign—as did Walter Hines Page, now Ambassador to Great Britain, then editor of the *World's Work*.

There have been all sorts of stories purporting to tell how Colonel House became interested in Wilson. The plain, unvarnished fact is that Colonel House was attracted, first, by the far-sighted policies Wilson put forward at Princeton, and later, by the legislation, which, as Governor, he sponsored in New Jersey. To begin with, Colonel House's interest was the casual interest of any man who reads of good work well done. Evidently, he told himself, this Woodrow Wilson was a person of ideals. But as House read more and more about New Jersey's new Governor and examined closely the laws her Legislature was passing, he was amazed and delighted to discover that here was a man who was doing things after his own heart, whose ideas were of a piece with the ideas that he, him-

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

self, had been cherishing. Here was an Eastern Democrat of forceful personality and liberal views, independent and fearless. The fact that Wilson had had no previous political career House counted as an advantage, for it narrowed by just so much the grounds for attacking him. It meant that the attacks upon him would have to be based upon his radical doctrines, and Colonel House was inclined to welcome such Republican tactics.

Colonel House had been working for Wilson's boom a long time before the Governor of New Jersey heard of his silent ally. The first time House's name was mentioned to Wilson is believed to have been on a Sunday in the late summer of 1911, when Mr. Page and Mr. Edward S. Martin of *Life* motored over to Princeton to discuss the situation with Mr. Wilson. They remarked to him in the course of their conversation:

"By the way, Governor, there is a man named House working for you down in Texas. You ought to meet him. He has ideas."

This was substantially, if not literally, what was said. At any rate, Governor Wilson was interested and he wrote to Colonel House to tell him how much he appreciated the work the Colonel was doing and hoped that they might arrange a meeting in the near future.

RISE OF WILSON'S PRESIDENTIAL STAR

The friends of Governor Wilson were especially anxious to have him supplement the reputation he was earning in the South and West through newspaper publicity by actual appearance in Democratic strongholds, and Colonel House suggested to them in September, 1911, that it would be worth while for the Governor of New Jersey to go down to Texas and address the State Fair at Dallas on October 28. The arrangements were made by Thomas Watson Gregory, now Attorney-General, who was House's right-hand man in Texas, and who visited Governor Wilson at Trenton with the invitation of the officers of the fair. It will be remembered that this was the same try-out which was offered to Mayor Gaynor. Unlike the Mayor, who had thrown away his chance the year before, however, Governor Wilson not only accepted the invitation, but kept it.

The Governor's address made an excellent impression, and was read throughout the country. It is amusing to note that in this speech, Mr. Wilson—who had used New Jersey as a laboratory in which to test out the theories he had been formulating during years of study, exactly as Mr. House had used Texas for the same purpose—spoke of the States as “the political laboratories of a free people.” He declared that the rising spirit of the period was in favor of reforms

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

and changes, "a just, well-considered, moderately executed readjustment of our present economic conditions." His speech, in fine, was a demand for progress by evolution, not by annihilation of existing machinery. Colonel House was more than ever satisfied that he had found the right man.

When the Governor returned to Trenton from Dallas he sent Mr. McCombs to see Colonel House. Mr. McCombs brought with him on this visit William G. McAdoo, afterwards Secretary of the Treasury and Vice-Chairman of the Democratic National Committee in the campaign of 1912. It was the first time Colonel House had met either of these gentlemen. Mr. McCombs told Colonel House that Governor Wilson would like to come and consult personally with him on the management of the Wilson boom. Colonel House, who was stopping at the Hotel Gotham, in New York, on his way from New England back to Texas for the winter, replied that he should like very much to meet the Governor whenever it was convenient for him.

Several days later—it must have been early in November, 1911; the exact date is uncertain—Mr. McCombs called up Colonel House at the Gotham to say that Governor Wilson was coming into town that afternoon and would like to make an appointment with him at four o'clock.

RISE OF WILSON'S PRESIDENTIAL STAR

Colonel House replied that the hour would be satisfactory to him. Later Governor Wilson himself rang up Colonel House and said he would like to see him if it was convenient. Colonel House answered that he was waiting for him, and the Governor came over from the Hotel Astor, where he was stopping.

They met in Colonel House's room at the Gotham, and they were friends from the moment they shook hands. Governor Wilson's appointments for the day gave him only an hour to spend with Colonel House, but they used every minute of it.

"We talked and talked," said Colonel House, in describing the meeting. "We knew each other for congenial souls at the very beginning. I don't remember just what we said, but I know we hit the high spots—we talked in generalities, you know. We exchanged our ideas about the democracies of the world, contrasted the European democracies with the United States, discussed where they differed, which was best in some respects and which in others."

He smiled one of his rare smiles—all the more cordial for their rarity.

"I remember we were very urbane," he went on. "Each gave the other every chance to have his say. He would say what he thought, and then wait and let me say what I thought. We agreed

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

about everything. That was a wonderful talk. The hour flew away. It seemed no time at all when it was over. I remember we both remarked that. We were very sorry we could not stay together longer, for each of us had many things he wanted to talk about which there had not been time to discuss. Each of us started to ask the other when he would be free for another meeting, and laughing over our mutual enthusiasm, we arranged an evening several days later when Governor Wilson should come and have dinner with me.

“Our second meeting was even more delightful. We dined alone at the Gotham, and talked together for hours. We talked about everything, I believe, and this time we could go into details and analyze our thoughts. It was remarkable. We found ourselves in agreement upon practically every one of the issues of the day. I never met a man whose thought ran so identically with mine.

“It was an evening several weeks later, when he had been paying me a similar visit, that I said to Mr. Wilson as he rose to go:

“‘Governor, isn’t it strange that two men who never knew each other before should think so much alike?’

“He answered:

RISE OF WILSON'S PRESIDENTIAL STAR

“‘My dear fellow, we have known each other all our lives.’

“I cannot tell you how pleased I was with him. He seemed too good to be true. I could hardly believe it would be possible to elect him. You know, in politics you can almost never elect the best man—he has done something, said something, or has something about him, which prevents his success. You have to take the next best man or perhaps the next to the next best man. But here was the best man available, the ideal man. And he seemed to have a good chance of success. He rarely made mistakes; he acted always with sense and judgment. You could rely upon his discretion to do what was best in any contingency. But we despaired of being able to nominate him because it seemed to be too good to be true; and after he was nominated, we were constantly worrying lest he should be defeated for the same reason. But Roosevelt stood by us, and he won.”

CHAPTER IX

WILSON ON THE ROAD TO THE WHITE HOUSE

IN championing Governor Wilson's presidential boom, Colonel House had not forgotten the last of his three requirements for a successful candidate. Governor Wilson was an Eastern Democrat and progressive, independent of any sinister control. But now the all-important question was what attitude toward this candidate would be assumed by Mr. Bryan? Shortly after Colonel House's first meeting with Governor Wilson, Mr. Bryan came to New York with Mrs. Bryan and stopped at the Holland House. Colonel House called him on the telephone one morning, and Mr. Bryan asked him to come downtown at once. The Colonel found Mr. and Mrs. Bryan at breakfast and sat down with them.

Of course, the conversation which followed was confidential, but it may be said that Colonel House presented Governor Wilson's case to Mr. Bryan as persuasively as he could—and while the Colonel is not an orator, he is an exceedingly good talker, man to man. He told Mr. Bryan in detail of Governor Wilson's work as head of

WILSON ON THE ROAD TO WHITE HOUSE

Princeton University, of his tireless efforts there in the direction of liberalism, of his democratic policy, and the plucky fight he had made against the powerful conservative element in the Board of Trustees. Colonel House also sketched briefly Governor Wilson's progressive legislative accomplishments at Trenton, and here he did not have to argue, for Mr. Bryan was fairly well informed on this phase of the Governor's career.

Mr. Bryan listened very attentively to everything that Colonel House had to say; and while he was rather non-committal he did indicate that he had several objections to Governor Wilson, all of which, however, Colonel House was able to explain away, except Mr. Bryan's suspicion of Col. George Harvey's enthusiastic advocacy of the Wilson candidacy in *Harper's Weekly*. To Mr. Bryan *Harper's Weekly* and Colonel Harvey meant Wall Street, J. P. Morgan & Co., and a link with the Money Trust. He did not like this connection, and he did not hesitate to say so.

Now, as a matter of fact, Mr. Bryan was by no means the first Democratic leader to point the harmful effects upon Wilson's chances of the extreme measure of support he was receiving on the editorial page of *Harper's Weekly*. According to a statement issued later by Col. Henry

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

Watterson, in the course of the lamentable Watterson-Harvey-Wilson controversy, Colonel Watterson, himself, spoke to both Governor Wilson and Colonel Harvey about the feeling among radical Democrats, and suggested that the soft pedal be applied to the Harvey efforts in the future. This was back in October of 1911, some weeks before Colonel House's talk with Mr. Bryan.

Fortunately for Colonel House, he had practically no connection with the three-cornered controversy which raged through the following January. He reported his conversation with Mr. Bryan to Governor Wilson at a meeting they had one night at dinner early in December. He also sent word through a friendly channel to Colonel Harvey. It was several days later that the famous encounter between Governor Wilson and Colonel Harvey took place at the Manhattan Club, in the course of which Harvey put the question direct to Governor Wilson whether the support of *Harper's* was doing him harm, and Mr. Wilson replied that some of his friends thought it was.

"Is that so?" Harvey is reported to have replied.

Then Colonel House went down to Texas, caught a fever, and was ill, most of the time in bed, for nearly two months. During those two

WILSON ON THE ROAD TO WHITE HOUSE

months the break between Governor Wilson and Colonel Harvey occurred. Colonel House always regretted that it had to occur, but he felt at the same time that it operated materially to Governor Wilson's advantage. It was featured elaborately for weeks in the South and West, and the radical elements in the party were convinced by it that Wilson was not a man with Wall Street leanings.

Another event of the two months during which Colonel House was sick in Texas was the publication of the Joline letter, an incident noteworthy for the light it sheds on Mr. Bryan's character. For a week or more before the New Year rumors were circulating in Washington and New York of the existence of a letter written by Governor Wilson in which he had commented adversely upon Mr. Bryan's candidacy in a previous Presidential campaign. The rumors grew as they spread, and presently half-a-dozen versions, each more sensational than the last, were to be heard. Finally, some of them appeared in the newspapers, with the information that the letter was in the possession of Adrian H. Joline, a New York lawyer and a trustee of Princeton University. When the story was referred to Governor Wilson, he stated that he had no objection to the publication of the letter, if it was printed in whole. Mr. Joline did so.

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

The letter was written from Princeton on April 29, 1907, and read as follows:

"My dear Mr. Joline:

"Thank you very much for sending me your address at Parsons, Kan., before the board of directors of the Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railway Company. I have read it with relish and entire agreement. Would that we could do something, at once dignified and effective, to knock Mr. Bryan once for all into a cocked hat!

"Cordially and sincerely yours,

"WOODROW WILSON."

When the letter was published Mr. Bryan was returning from a visit to Kingston, Jamaica, by way of Key West and Florida. Some one at Wilson headquarters in New York telegraphed Colonel House to meet Mr. Bryan on his journey, North and explain the letter to him. But Colonel House was too sick to go, and the mission was given to Josephus Daniels, the "newspaper friend" to whom Bryan referred in the only statement on the letter he ever made for publication:

"I have nothing whatever to say about that (the Wilson letter). I never heard of such a letter until I was informed of its existence by one of my newspaper friends. I am not discussing Presidential candidacies at this time."

WILSON ON THE ROAD TO WHITE HOUSE

Mr. Bryan made this statement upon his arrival in Washington from the South to speak at the Jackson Day dinner on January 8. Governor Wilson also had been invited to speak at this dinner, and it was feared by many of the Governor's supporters that Mr. Bryan might take the opportunity to evince his displeasure at the letter, or even to denounce the Governor in his speech. But, instead, Mr. Bryan went out of his way to show that he did not cherish ill-feeling. He sought out Governor Wilson at the dinner, and not only spoke to him, but put his arm around his shoulders in a gesture of comradely affection.

It is said that Mr. Bryan adopted this attitude because he was too genuinely great of soul to exploit the illicit use of a private letter. For another thing, he remembered that in years past he himself had had occasion to criticize Grover Cleveland and other Democratic chiefs with whom he had disagreed. Whatever his reasons—and no matter what they may have been, they only reflect credit upon his generosity and fairness—Mr. Bryan never permitted this incident to influence him in any way against Governor Wilson's candidacy. He did not favor Wilson, outwardly at least, prior to the Convention at Baltimore; but neither did he oppose him. Indeed, he said frankly that he would not take sides against either Wilson or Champ Clark, Speaker

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

of the House of Representatives, whose name was beginning to be put prominently before the voters.

A few weeks before the Democratic Convention was due to meet in Baltimore some of Governor Wilson's friends urged that it might be desirable for him to make a second trip to Texas for a round of speeches. But Colonel House flatly negatived this proposition, while admitting freely the importance of winning the State's delegation.

"You have already made your bow to Texas, Governor," said the Colonel. "That is enough. If I thought it was necessary for you to make a second visit, I should be convinced that you could not win the nomination. Leave Texas to your friends down there."

So Governor Wilson agreed that Texas was to be left to Colonel House to swing into the Wilson column of delegations, and the Colonel made good his promise. Barring his management of the Sayers campaign, perhaps no exploit of his career in domestic politics was more remarkable than that. Colonel House had taken no active share in State politics in some years, and the local machinery of the party was entirely in the hands of Senator Joseph W. Bailey and his friends, who were outspoken in favor of Governor Harmon of Ohio, the candidate for whom the conservative Democrats were shouting. The Democratic

WILSON ON THE ROAD TO WHITE HOUSE

State Committee was made up practically entirely of Bailey men.

Apparently no prospect could have been more hopeless. Bailey's clique were whole-heartedly antagonistic to Wilson. They were willing to go to any lengths to keep the nomination from him. He was precisely the sort of man they did not wish to see at the head of the party. But Colonel House was not discouraged. He went to work quietly, and at first got his friends interested. Who were they? Well, men like Albert Sidney Burleson, who had been elected Representative to succeed Governor Sayers and who is now Postmaster-General, and Thomas W. Gregory, who had made a reputation as Special Assistant Attorney-General of the State in prosecuting the Waters-Pierce Oil Company and winning \$1,600,000 damages, the first time the courts ever sustained a suit brought under the Sherman Anti-Trust law.

Others were Cato Sells, Senator Culberson, Governor Campbell, M. M. Crane, W. F. Ramsey, Cone Johnson, Thomas B. Love, T. A. Thomson, Moshall Hicks, and Thomas Ball, all of them veterans of House's State campaigns in the past.

They used the same tactics in rallying the State for Wilson. It is very difficult for Colonel House to describe how he accomplishes such things. Probably, it is largely a question of instinct.

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

"How did we do it?" he says. "We just picked the right people. That was all. We didn't use any brass bands. We went ahead quietly, secured control of the State Convention, and elected a solid Wilson delegation."

And, mind you, this was in the face of a State Committee equally solidly opposed to any endorsement of Wilson! Furthermore, that Texas delegation went to the Baltimore Convention so rabid for Wilson that some Champ Clark men who were seated next to them said they were afraid to stir. Excepting Pennsylvania, no other delegation made such a strident, vociferous fight for Wilson through all the ups-and-downs of one of the most dramatic political conventions ever held in this country.

There is a funny story to illustrate the surprise with which Wilson's opponents heard that Texas had drifted away from Harmon. One of the managers of the Ohio Governor was in New York in the early spring of 1912, and received the following telegram from Texas:

"Everything fine down here, but will you please find out what Col. E. M. House is doing? He is stopping at the Gotham."

The manager in question was a young man, but he had been diligently on the job for several

WILSON ON THE ROAD TO WHITE HOUSE

years and he plumed himself on knowing by name every politician of State magnitude.

"House?" he murmured to himself. "House? I've never heard that name. Yet he must amount to something."

So on his way uptown to the Gotham he looked up a Southern friend who was also a political authority.

"Know Colonel Ed? Why, of course, I know Colonel Ed!" exclaimed the authority. "A mighty fine man, sir. He's a power in Texas—been running things down there since 1892. A great friend of Bryan's."

The young manager decided that it was distinctly up to him to meet such a man, and he went direct to the Gotham. The desk-clerk recognized the name at once.

"Oh, yes. Colonel House, of Austin, Texas. He is stopping here. Here he comes now."

And as a writer in the New York *Sun* described it:

"A slender, middle-aged man, with a gray, close-cropped mustache, well-dressed, calm-looking, was coming quietly in, with an accent on the 'quiet.' He was not pussyfooting in or slinking in or gliding in, but while he walked firmly he walked quietly. He went up to the desk and asked the man presiding a question in a quiet tone. He did not hiss the question nor did he

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

whisper it; he asked it quietly, and when he got his answer he bowed courteously and walked quietly to the elevator, which, catching the infection, shot quietly out of sight."

Somewhat awed, the young manager wired back to Texas:

"Your Colonel House is up here and I understand he is going to stay here. I think he is devoting all his time to his personal business."

The answer came back:

"Never mind what you think; you'd better find out what Colonel House is doing and what he is going to do."

Thus confronted, the neophyte in high politics meekly secured a personal interview with Colonel House, experiencing no difficulty thereby, as is the customary experience of all persons who take their courage in their hands and essay to climb the wall of modesty which is the Colonel's only protection. Meekly, too, the young man asked his question, and quietly he received his answer. Colonel House was very sorry; he admired Governor Harmon tremendously. But speaking for himself alone, he favored the nomination of Governor Wilson of New Jersey.

CHAPTER X

HAPPENINGS AT THE BALTIMORE CONVENTION

THE Duke of Wellington once summed up the Battle of Waterloo to William Creevey, the diarist, as "the nearest run thing you ever saw in your life." The phrase aptly fits Woodrow Wilson's struggle for the Presidential nomination. American politics, Republican and Democratic, were in a state of turmoil in 1912. In both parties the same rift had been drawn between the reactionary conservatives, who dreaded the signs of progress, and the liberal element, who strove to give effect to the new ideas. The issues of the two internal contests, however, were very different.

The rebellion of the so-called Progressive party, the Bull Moose, headed by Theodore Roosevelt, against the standpat control of the Republican Organization by the leaders of the Old Guard, split the parent party. The revolt in the Democratic ranks, on the other hand, while not so explosive in its development, was founded on more constructive principles, and under the leadership of Wilson acquired control of the

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

party machinery and emancipated it from worn-out fetishes and crippling attachments.

There was a general feeling in Democratic circles, during the months immediately preceding the National Convention at Baltimore in June, that Wilson was the strongest of the several candidates in the field, but so bitter was the fight made against him by the conservatives of the party that he must have been a man of omniscient power who predicted unqualifiedly a Wilson victory in the Convention. The tactics of the opposition to Wilson were very skillful, especially in the final stages of the contest. It is probable that if it had not been for the advance work in his interest, done secretly by Colonel House and other political friends, Mr. Wilson would have been squeezed out in the later rounds of the Convention battle.

The greatest asset Governor Wilson possessed was the neutrality of Mr. Bryan. To begin with, this neutrality was nothing more than neutrality; it consisted solely in Mr. Bryan's keeping his hands off and refusing to take sides with one or the other candidate. In those days, when Mr. Bryan was asked for his opinion on Presidential candidates, he would echo certain editorials which had appeared in *The Commoner*.

"Why, there is no dearth of Presidential timber," he would say. "Look at Folk; he's a good

HAPPENINGS AT BALTIMORE CONVENTION

man. Look at Culberson, of Texas; he's a good man. There are plenty of them."

Some shrewd observers at the time wondered if Mr. Bryan was singling out for mention men who, despite their personal qualifications, were second-raters in public estimation, with the idea of concerting a diversion of votes from the stronger candidates, so that at the last moment the band might blare "Hail to the Chief" and some leather-throated spell-binder could get up on his legs and propose "that honored and great American, that stalwart standard-bearer of Democracy, that favorite son of tens of millions of his fellow-citizens, William Jennings Bryan!" It is no more than just to Mr. Bryan to write it down emphatically that no action of his gave countenance to this theory, and in fact, the actual sequence of events was wholly to the contrary.

For, as the booms of the several candidates progressed in the opening months of 1912, Mr. Bryan's sympathy began to be attracted more and more to Governor Wilson. The reasons for this are readily apparent.

The Wilson boom gained great headway at the start, received fresh impetus through the Harvey and Watterson controversies, and in absence of opposition from Bryan, rolled at full speed across the states where Bryan's support had been firmest in previous elections, snatching

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

up delegations right and left. The chief opponent of Governor Wilson up to this stage had been Governor Harmon, and he had proved absolutely ineffectual to stop the progressive movement in the party. In Texas, for instance, the Bailey group had tried to fight Colonel House's faction with Harmon and had failed pitifully. They might have made much trouble for the Wilson supporters, though, had they picked Champ Clark, instead of the Ohio man.

About this time the forces in the party which had been opposing Wilson became aware of the seriousness of their situation, and apparently decided to throw over Harmon. In his place they picked Representative Oscar Underwood of Alabama, who was satisfactory to the Hearst-Tammany combine and the other reactionary elements. But Underwood did not work much better than Harmon as a magnet for delegations, and in desperation some one among the opposition—it has been suggested that he was William F. Sheehan, the political brains of William Randolph Hearst—conceived the brilliant idea of using Champ Clark as a sort of stalking-horse to draw Bryan votes away from Wilson.

The cheery Speaker of the House had always been considered a Bryan man; Wilson—especially after the publication of the Joline letter—could not be regarded as a last-ditch Bryanite. It was

HAPPENINGS AT BALTIMORE CONVENTION

figured that if the Harmon and Underwood votes were switched to Clark, he would draw at least half the Bryan men in the Convention, and then—presto! the Wilson *débâcle* would begin. And in the hurly-burly Clark could be withdrawn and Underwood nominated and all would be well.

Whether or not this is really what was planned is mainly a matter of conjecture, although the known facts seem to bear it out and lend consistency to the theory. But if such a plot was formulated the human forces underlying all political conceptions made hash of it. Clark leaped into popular favor the instant he was brought forward. He had the conservatives behind him already, remember, and his own record and personality won many radicals to him. There was no more easy acquisition of delegations for Wilson. As Colonel House once put it:

“The honeymoon was over. We had hard work and plenty of it.”

But no less did the project of the anti-Wilson reactionaries suffer by Clark's astounding success. They were forced to give up all serious thought of using him as a stalking-horse, a covering mantle under which to smuggle the nomination to Underwood. The original plan of beating Wilson with Clark, and then nominating some one else, perforce was abandoned. The stalking-horse had run away with his backers. On the

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

eve of the convention the issue was perfectly plain. It was either Wilson or Clark.

Now, observe how the subtle tactics of the opposition worked in Wilson's favor. Bryan was as much aware as anybody else where Clark's bedrock support came from. He knew that the men behind Clark were the men, representing the interests, that he, Bryan, had always fought tooth and nail—in 1896, in 1900, in 1904, and in 1908. Inevitably, his sympathies began to turn toward Wilson. From neutrality he shifted to benevolent neutrality. And as the opposing forces ranged themselves more definitely at Baltimore he felt himself compelled at last to espouse Wilson's cause openly. Wilson's friends were his friends. He would not let himself be deceived by the honestly progressive support that was going to Clark. He knew that it was not these progressives who had first picked the Speaker for the nomination.

Mr. Bryan's stand throughout the campaign of 1912 is one of the finest chapters in his life. It demonstrates his fundamental honesty and sincerity of purpose. There were several reasons why he should not have liked Woodrow Wilson. There were other reasons why he should have been jealous of any man of such vision and aggressiveness. But he never flinched or hesitated to judge the situation on the facts. He perceived clearly that Wilson stood for the kind

HAPPENINGS AT BALTIMORE CONVENTION

of things that he stood for ; that the men arrayed against Wilson were against those things. He backed Wilson with all his power, and to him Wilson owed his nomination as much as to any one man.

Or put it this way: without Bryan, Wilson could not have been nominated, and without Colonel House he probably would not have obtained, first, Bryan's toleration and finally Bryan's support.

Colonel House, himself, had no share in the tempestuous events of the Baltimore Convention. On the day the convention opened, June 25, 1912, he sailed from New York for a vacation in Europe. The act was delightfully typical of the man. He had corralled every delegation that could be dragooned into declaring for Wilson; he had done everything that could be done; and he knew that the heat and hysteria of the convention would only undermine his health, which he desired to conserve in anticipation of the campaign in the fall. Placidly sitting on the deck of the steamship, he read of the long-drawn battle on the convention floor in brief wireless bulletins, and did not learn the result until a week after sailing, when the vessel touched at Queenstown. But he did not let the uncertainty worry him. He had done his best. The rest was on the knees of fate.

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

How well he builded was illustrated by the result of the fight between the contending factions, a fight which may very well have been the deciding factor in the party's history. It will be remembered that the convention demonstrated a progressive tendency on the second day, when the radicals enforced the adoption of the report of the minority of the Rules Committee, smashing the unit rule, under which the reactionaries had hoped to retain their power and control the convention. But Wilson was still a long way from victory. He gained slowly on Clark up to the forty-first ballot on the night of July 1, when he passed the 500 mark. But it was not until the forty-sixth ballot, in the opening hours of July 3, that he received the essential two-thirds, with 990 votes, 264 more than were necessary.

There never was one of those ballots when the chairman of the Texas delegation did not rise and shout in a voice that filled the hall from wall to wall:

"Texas casts her forty votes for Woodrow Wilson of New Jersey!"

Those Texas votes might well be likened to the corner-stone of the Wilson candidacy, for around them gathered slowly more and more fragments of the solid South, men of the West, and in the end even the ninety votes of New York, held by Charles F. Murphy, of Tammany

HAPPENINGS AT BALTIMORE CONVENTION

Hall, in the hollow of his hand, and the disgruntled delegations of Alabama and Missouri.

According to rumors industriously circulated at the time, Colonel House was the lavish spender who put up money to keep many weary delegates in Baltimore during the last three days of the convention. This was not true. Neither was the story true that he conferred concerning Wilson's affairs with Thomas Fortune Ryan. He has never met Mr. Ryan at any time. He had nothing whatever to do with the actual work of the convention. Having mixed the necessary dynamic human forces in the great political retort, he let them simmer and boil until they reached the combustion point. But he could not be sure, any more than the next man, what the resulting mixture would be. He wanted it to turn out a certain way; he mixed his elements to turn out that way. But no simple son of man on the footstool could have been certain in the circumstances. It is rather uncanny that those dissimilar interests should have united as he had planned. That is, it is uncanny until you remember the previous occasions when his touch, light and unnoticed, had worked with the same unfailing sureness.

CHAPTER XI

GOOD JUDGMENT IN A TICKLISH CAMPAIGN

EVEN the most ardent supporter of Woodrow Wilson will concede that as things happened in 1912 the principal factor in his election was the candidacy of Theodore Roosevelt. Without Colonel Roosevelt's intercession, Mr. Wilson might very well have been elected against Mr. Taft or any other candidate put up by the Republican Old Guard. Colonel House is inclined to believe, too, that Mr. Wilson could have defeated Mr. Roosevelt, himself, running on an unsplit Republican ticket, by the diligent use on the stump of the third term bogey and Colonel Roosevelt's pledge to abstain from accepting another nomination. But the plain fact is that neither of these contingencies occurred, and in the campaign as conducted the Roosevelt candidacy simply slit the Republican strength to ribbons, electing Mr. Wilson by the greatest number of electoral votes cast for any Presidential candidate since George Washington was first chosen without opposition.

One of the strongest trumps in the hands of

GOOD JUDGMENT IN A TICKLISH CAMPAIGN

the Democratic spellbinders was the famous Rooseveltian simile of the "two cups of coffee." The phrase will be a classic in American political annals.

"If a man declines another cup of coffee, does that mean that he has no right to change his mind later? Certainly not, sir! Well, then, why cannot Colonel Roosevelt change his mind and accept a third term?"

Looking back on it, one is tempted to wonder why anybody should have had a doubt of the campaign's result. But in the red-hot atmosphere of the hustings there was a disposition to forget the neutralizing effect of the Republican and Progressive attacks upon each other and the unbroken array of the Democratic ranks. The Progressive movement attained surprising proportions, driven by Colonel Roosevelt's dynamic personality and a remarkable wave of politico-religious hysteria. Who will ever forget the delegates to the second Chicago Convention dispersing to their self-appointed tasks to the tune of "Onward, Christian Soldiers"? It was difficult then to appraise the exact extent of the Progressive sweep. Many Democratic leaders were in a panicky mood.

Colonel House returned from his vacation in Europe in August. There was no understanding between him and Mr. Wilson at this time—at

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

least, none of a formal nature. But shortly after his return Mr. Wilson sent for him to discuss several political questions which were essential to the conduct of the campaign, and thereafter he became identified with every decision of importance. Mr. Wilson already had discovered the extraordinary powers of prevision and impersonal analysis which Colonel House possessed.

"Colonel House," the President told newspaper reporters before his inauguration, "can hold a subject away from him and examine it and analyze it, as if he had nothing to do with it, better than any man I ever knew."

Before very long others of Mr. Wilson's advisers came to realize the dependability of this man's judgment. They would bring their problems to him, and he would ascertain all the available facts, and from these facts, in connection with the human influences behind them, he would work out the probable course of events.

"His ability to foretell what a given line of action will bring about is almost uncanny," Attorney-General Gregory declared afterward.

But of course the real reason for Mr. Wilson's trust in Colonel House was his appreciation of Colonel House's unselfish motives. And similarly, the most jealous and ambitious members of Mr. Wilson's political cabinet were assured that they did not need to be fearful of being dis-

GOOD JUDGMENT IN A TICKLISH CAMPAIGN

placed by Colonel House, and so they came to him with all their fears and disappointments, their animosities, their dislikes, their complaints of the cabals they conceived were being framed against them. He stood apart from all the intriguing and place-seeking, caught the tangled skein of truth and fiction in his hands and wove a texture substantial enough to support the work of the campaign.

That was not a pleasant campaign. It was probably the most bothersome Colonel House ever took part in. There were two opposing elements in the National Committee. Mr. McCombs, the National Chairman, was worn out by his arduous labors and ill at one time for six weeks. The men who were running the campaign were new to their work, keen on their jobs, to be sure, all clean-cut, intelligent, wide-awake young Americans. But to many of them the political game on such a scale was a novel proposition, and they were apt to be nervous in crises and jumpy in the dark. Colonel House's job—or rather the most important one of several jobs—was to harmonize conflicting factions, to co-ordinate their efforts and smooth out traces of antagonism.

He succeeded to an extraordinary degree, although he steadfastly lived up to his life-long rule not to take any official part in the campaign.

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

When national headquarters were opened in the Fifth Avenue Building in New York, the campaign managers set aside an office for Colonel House and put his name on the door. As soon as he discovered it, he insisted that his name be removed and he refused to use the office. The very idea of having an office allocated to himself in a campaign headquarters was irritating to his ingrained modesty and inimical to his methods of work.

He visited national headquarters during the campaign of 1912 much oftener than he did during the 1916 campaign, but he never became a familiar figure. The wise ones at headquarters, however, learned to anticipate his visits whenever there were rumblings of trouble underneath the routine of the campaign. When he came he never stayed long, and usually he had little to say; but after he had left peace would return and the work of electing Woodrow Wilson go on unhindered.

A member of the committee in that campaign explained it this way:

"Colonel House would come into an office and say a few words quietly, and after he had gone you would suddenly become seized by a good idea. You would suggest that idea to your friends or superiors and be congratulated for it; it would work first rate, beyond your wildest dreams. You

GOOD JUDGMENT IN A TICKLISH CAMPAIGN

might forget about it. But some time, as sure as shooting, in cogitating proudly over it, you would come to an abrupt realization that that idea had been oozed into your brain by Colonel House in the course of conversation.

"You did not know it at the time—because the Colonel did not want you to know it. He is never anxious to gain credit by his ideas; anybody who can make 'em work is welcome to them. Well, sir, as a matter of fact, before the campaign was over some of us had come to the conclusion that Colonel House was about the biggest man in the works. He never held any position; he wouldn't take one. He didn't seem to represent any person or persons. Nobody ever thought of declining to listen to him. You were always anxious to talk to him; he had a quiet way of making you feel that it was a personal interest in your particular welfare that prompted him. Besides, you knew that he had no ax to grind, that he was working for Wilson, and through Wilson for the country. And anyway, after you had listened to him once you knew he was worth listening to."

While the campaign was on few people had any conception of the rôle Colonel House was playing, he moved so unostentatiously, he effaced himself so completely. His name appeared in the newspapers very rarely, and then merely as a visitor to the candidate. But his was the guid-

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

ing hand that steered the party's destiny. In the planning of all the major strategy his voice was heard and heeded.

It was he, for instance, who counseled Mr. Wilson to place emphasis upon the tariff issue in his speeches, because he felt that Mr. Wilson could make a better presentation of it than the other candidates, and with his trained scholar's mind and mastery of history, point out the fallacies of the high-protection theory. And it was at his suggestion that Dr. David Franklin Houston, chancellor of Washington University at St. Louis, was invited to come East and assist Mr. Wilson in the preparation of tariff speeches with his monumental store of knowledge on all the political-economic aspects of the tariff system. Out of that chance meeting during the campaign was to spring an association lasting through future years and of great importance to the nation's interests.

Colonel House also fully agreed with Mr. Wilson in his determination to refrain from any personal attacks upon Mr. Taft. This was one of the shrewdest bits of strategy in the campaign. Its practical effect was to leave it to Mr. Taft to lay bare his own political weaknesses. Mr. Wilson took occasion to applaud Mr. Taft's honesty of purpose, his personal probity, his fine patriotism. Then he would turn and point to the ad-

GOOD JUDGMENT IN A TICKLISH CAMPAIGN

visers who encircled the Republican President and to the reactionary trend of the Administration in the past four years.

Against Colonel Roosevelt, on the other hand, Mr. Wilson swung his bludgeon with accuracy and force, laying bare all the contradictions of the third-termers' brilliantly erratic career, stripping the high-sounding Progressive platform of its verbiage and reducing it to the residuum of possible accomplishment, riddling the vagaries of its revolutionary social doctrines. In fine, Mr. Wilson put before the voters who teetered in their minds between Colonel Roosevelt and himself, the contrast of a real progressive with a false Progressive.

But when Colonel Roosevelt was shot by a crazy man in Milwaukee on October 14, with prompt chivalry Mr. Wilson not only abstained from any further attacks upon an opponent who was no longer able to reply, but also cancelled all his future speaking engagements until Colonel Roosevelt had recovered sufficiently to make his appearance in Madison Square Garden for the wind-up of the campaign.

It was Colonel House, by the way, who sent for Captain Bill McDonald, the Texas Ranger, to come East and act as bodyguard for Mr. Wilson the day after Colonel Roosevelt was shot. Colonel House wired:

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

"Come immediately. Important. Bring your artillery."

Captain Bill wired back:

"I'm comin'."

Colonel House loves to tell about Captain Bill's arrival in New York a few days later. The old gun-fighter, who had known the Colonel ever since they were boys, had jumped to the conclusion that some people in the East must have been "pickin'" on his friend, and he arrived with blood in his eye. He had borrowed the carfare from a friend, and had not stopped to shave.

"I can see him now," Colonel House described the incident, "and thinking of meeting him that evening reminds me of another time I met him with Albert Bigelow Paine, who wrote for him the story of his adventurous life. He wore his old yellow slicker and slouch hat. We took him to a little hotel near the Players Club, and I shall never forget the look that dawned on Paine's face when Captain Bill slipped off his slicker and coat and calmly unhitched his six-shooter and automatic from either hip. He carried those guns for ballast, you might say. He couldn't have walked straight without them. And he took them off just as you might take off your watch and key-ring."

GOOD JUDGMENT IN A TICKLISH CAMPAIGN

There was a story circulated at the time of Captain Bill's arrival in New York that he had been arrested in the Waldorf-Astoria for carrying concealed weapons, and that Colonel House secured his release. Nothing like this ever happened. Captain Bill did precisely what he was asked to do; he lived with Mr. Wilson, night and day, throughout the campaign, and he conducted himself like the simple frontier gentleman that he was.

Disagreeable as were many incidents in the campaign of 1912, the problems to be solved were very simple. The most difficult task was to keep the peace in the Democratic ranks. Colonel House's unfailing advice to all the political managers, who came to him in fear and trembling at the uproar Roosevelt was creating, was to sit tight and not to make mistakes. Why was he so confident? Because he had studied dispassionately Colonel Roosevelt's effort and its effect upon the Republican party, and had then contrasted it with the Wilson feeling traceable in every part of the Union. He could not make himself see anything but a Wilson victory by such means.

"Let Theodore Roosevelt elect us," was the way he summed up his strategy.

How effectively this strategy worked you may see from an examination of the figures for the election of 1912. Although Mr. Wilson received

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

only 6,303,063 votes as compared with 4,168,564 for Colonel Roosevelt and 3,439,529 for Mr. Taft—which were 2,134,499 more than Colonel Roosevelt and 1,305,030 less than the combined votes of the two other candidates—so complete was the split in the Republican party that the Democrats carried almost every Republican stronghold in the East and West and Mr. Wilson actually received 435 electoral votes against 88 for Colonel Roosevelt and 8 for Mr. Taft.

CHAPTER XII

FORMATION OF MR. WILSON'S CABINET

THE first task of a President-elect is to form his Cabinet, and no prospective occupant of the White House ever confronted so many knotty problems in this undertaking as did Woodrow Wilson. Mr. Wilson undoubtedly owed a considerable measure of his success with the voters to his having disregarded the hide-bound traditions established by Mr. Bryan. But he was thoroughly progressive, himself, in his beliefs and policies, and he could not establish connections with the little ring of Democratic reactionaries who had fought so hard to keep the nomination from him. What he had to set himself to do in the circumstances was so to frame his Cabinet as to unite in it representatives of all those elements of the party with which he could congenially work in accord. Colonel House had a greater share in this difficult work than any other of the President's advisers, but his influence has been distorted by rumor out of all resemblance to fact.

It is another clew to his character that none of

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

the old wives' tales circulated about his mythical potency has riled him so deeply as the oft-repeated assertion that he "selected" the President's Cabinet.

"They talk about my selection of men for the Cabinet," he exclaimed in one of his few bursts of feelings. "That is as silly as other things they say. Can you imagine Woodrow Wilson submitting to the nomination by me or any one else of members of his Cabinet? It is preposterous! Those things took place just as they do in private life. We talked together—sometimes by ourselves; sometimes with others—about places to be filled and available men to fill them. Names would be mentioned, discussed, rejected, set aside for future consideration, dragged out again, compared with new ones. Our first test was fitness. My advice might be asked; I might be asked to suggest a name or names. I would do so, and the President would examine them in detail. Some he would dismiss after a short consideration; others he might adopt. You must remember that I had a very wide acquaintance with public men in this country, much wider than Mr. Wilson had at that time, for I had been in touch with political affairs for years before he left Princeton.

"I remember that he was frequently attacked in the early days of the Administration for picking unknown and untried men for the Cabinet.

FORMATION OF MR. WILSON'S CABINET

As a matter of fact, I think that the trial furnished by the war, let alone the preceding four years of governmental progress and evolution, demonstrated the Cabinet to be an unusually competent body of men. Other Cabinets may have contained more individually brilliant men, but I doubt if many Cabinets have shown a higher level of efficiency and conscientious labor. Consider that the Democratic party had been out of office for sixteen years, and that we had practically no trained men available. Our case was very different from the Republicans'. They had plenty of men who had held office and who were known quantities. But the generation of Democratic office-holders who had been employed in Cleveland's last Administration had grown too old for active service, and the President had to go into the ranks and select men who had never held high executive office under the Federal Government.

"In the course of his search for the best men available, some of my friends were selected, because, upon analysis, they seemed to be among the best. Every one of those men, with whom I was acquainted before the Administration came into power, has done splendidly."

Colonel House has generally been given credit for putting three men in the Cabinet at the start of the Administration—Albert S. Burleson,

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

Postmaster-General; Franklin K. Lane, Secretary of the Interior; and David F. Houston, Secretary of Agriculture. The truth is that Colonel House was acquainted with every member of the Cabinet before the Administration went into office, except Lindley M. Garrison, President Wilson's First Secretary of War.

Mr. Garrison was chosen for this post at the last minute. The War portfolio had been offered to Representative A. Mitchel Palmer, of Pennsylvania, now Official Custodian of Enemy Alien Property, but Mr. Palmer was a Quaker and did not feel at liberty to identify himself with military affairs. When he made known his decision there was very little time left in which to secure a man of the proper caliber for Secretary of War, and Joseph Tumulty, Secretary to the President, suggested the name of Mr. Garrison, then Chancellor of New Jersey. Mr. Garrison had the advantage of being from the President's own State and could easily be looked up. Mr. Wilson sent for him, liked him very much, and offered him the place.

There is a very interesting little story about the three friends of Colonel House named above. In the winter of 1902—by an odd coincidence the same year in which Woodrow Wilson was elected president of Princeton University—Mr. Lane, having just been defeated in the election for Gov-

FORMATION OF MR. WILSON'S CABINET

ernor of California, started on a trip East by way of Texas, planning to stop off at Austin to pay a visit to Mr. Mezes, brother-in-law of Colonel House, who had just been elected Dean of the University of Texas in succession to Dr. Houston, who had become president of the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas. Lane and Mezes had been students together at the University of California, and after that Mezes had gone to Harvard, where he had met Houston, and he and Houston had come to Texas together as professors in the faculty of the new State University.

As was quite natural, during Lane's visit, Dean Mezes gave a dinner in honor of his guest, which was attended by Thomas W. Gregory, at that time a well-known lawyer and a regent of the University of Texas; Representative Burleson, Dr. Houston, Mr. House, R. L. Batts, now a Judge of the United States Circuit Court, and C. K. Bell, who has since died. Rather an impressive little party, was it not? There were present four future Cabinet members and the unofficial adviser of the President. Except Mezes, none of these men had ever met Lane before. The others, of course, were old friends and allies of Colonel House in his essays in State politics.

Colonel House conceived an interest in Mr. Lane at this meeting, which was intensified by

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

Mr. Lane's work as a member of the Interstate Commerce Commission, to which he was appointed by President Roosevelt in 1905 and on which body he served with distinction until his elevation to the Cabinet by President Wilson in March, 1913. It is noteworthy that Mr. Wilson had never met Secretary Lane until the day of the first meeting of the new Cabinet at the White House. It was necessary for Mr. Lane when he came to step up and introduce himself to the President. Mr. Wilson chose his Secretary of the Interior partly on the advice of Colonel House, but mainly on examination of Mr. Lane's work on the Interstate Commerce Commission.

Dr. Houston, it will be recalled, President Wilson had met during the preceding campaign, in the course of the preparation of data for his sledge-hammer speeches on the tariff. Mr. Burleson, who had a long and distinguished record as a member of the lower house of Congress, had been one of the earliest supporters of Mr. Wilson in the pre-convention campaign, and the President had had numerous opportunities of judging his capacity by personal intercourse in subsequent months. Of these two men, Dr. Houston was a scholar and economist, who brought an unusual fund of special knowledge to his department, and Mr. Burleson demonstrated the ability in organization and executive control so essential

FORMATION OF MR. WILSON'S CABINET

to the head of the largest Government business enterprise in the world.

Although he did not become a member of the Cabinet at this time, it is convenient to mention here the circumstances which brought about the appointment of Mr. Gregory as Attorney-General in August, 1914, to succeed James C. McReynolds, of Tennessee, upon Mr. McReynolds's promotion to the Supreme Court. Mr. Gregory, it will be recalled, made a name for himself by his prosecution, while Attorney-General of Texas, of the Waters-Pierce Oil Company. Like Burleson, he had been one of the steadiest supporters of Mr. Wilson's claims to the Presidential nomination. It was Mr. Gregory, for instance, who arranged Mr. Wilson's visit to Texas in October, 1911, to speak at the State Fair at Dallas, the occasion having served for Mr. Wilson's political bow to the Southwest. In 1913, Gregory was appointed a Special Assistant Attorney-General to prosecute the Government's reopened case against the New Haven Railroad, which had been started spasmodically in the Roosevelt Administration and dropped after Mr. Taft became President. Mr. Gregory handled this difficult job with conspicuous efficiency, and so became the logical successor to Attorney-General McReynolds.

Of the other members of the Cabinet, Mr. Mc-

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

Adoo won his appointment by his splendid work as vice-chairman of the National Committee in the campaign; he was one of the few members with whom the President had been acquainted prior to taking office. William B. Wilson, the Secretary of Labor, palpably was chosen purely for his ability to interpret the voice of labor and guard the interests of the workingman. Mr. Daniels, the Secretary of the Navy, was the "newspaper friend" of Mr. Bryan who was sent to explain the Joline letter. He was very active in Mr. Wilson's support and very popular in the South. William C. Redfield, Secretary of Commerce, was from New York, and had made a reputation in tariff debates in the House of Representatives.

But, of course, the great enigma of the Cabinet was Mr. Bryan, who, as Secretary of State, was the senior member, and sat at the President's right hand at meetings. Mr. Bryan was the first man picked for the Cabinet. There was no discussion of who was to be Secretary of State. That portfolio was reserved for Mr. Bryan from the start. The President and Colonel House were in perfect accord in this matter. Mr. Bryan's inclusion in the Cabinet was a stroke of genius for which the President has never been sorry.

As has been pointed out before, President Wilson found himself in a peculiar position after his

FORMATION OF MR. WILSON'S CABINET

election. Mr. Wilson's nomination had been due as much as anything else to Mr. Bryan's last-minute support. And despite Mr. Wilson's success at the polls, Mr. Bryan could still dispute with him the leadership of the Democratic party—if Mr. Bryan chose to do so. In plain words, Mr. Bryan could be a powerful friend to the Administration or a very dangerous opponent, all the more dangerous because he happened to be on the same side of the fence. The party, moreover, was still rent by feuds and dissensions; discord was in the air. Every sign foreboded trouble. It was considered by the President and his friends that the correct policy was for them to placate Mr. Bryan by recognizing tacitly the value of his assistance. The wisdom of this policy was amply proved by the final issue of the Bryan episode.

Without Bryan's aid in holding the party together until the Administration had found its feet, the Administration almost certainly would have gone on the rocks. When he did break loose he did harm only to himself, because it was obvious that he had been treated with every consideration, and that he could not reproach the President for anything. The wisest thing Mr. Wilson did was to get Mr. Bryan into his Cabinet.

But it was by no means certain that Mr. Bryan

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

would consent to enter a Cabinet of the composition determined upon by the President. Of the ten members, only two—Burleson and Daniels—could be regarded as Bryan Democrats. Mr. Redfield, the Secretary of Commerce, had bolted Bryan tickets in the past and voted for Republican candidates; Mr. Lane had accepted appointment under Roosevelt; Mr. McAdoo had been identified with the activities of a corporation and had never been conspicuous in any preceding campaign. Some of the President's advisers predicted that at first sight of such a Cabinet Mr. Bryan would shy away from the Administration. It was for Colonel House, who knew Mr. Bryan better than any of the President's intimates, to prove the contrary.

Quite a stir was caused among the politicians early in February, 1913, by the sudden announcement that Colonel House had gone South to visit Mr. Bryan at the Bryan winter home in Miami. It was stated in the newspapers—and never denied—that Colonel House had been dispatched as a bearer of belts to carry to Mr. Bryan the President's proffer of the Secretaryship of State. But persons who knew Colonel House chuckled at the thought that he was become a messenger-boy for the President.

The truth is that the Secretaryship of State had been offered to Mr. Bryan weeks prior to

FORMATION OF MR. WILSON'S CABINET

this and had been accepted by him. Colonel House visited Mr. Bryan to tell him in detail of the President's Cabinet appointments and outline to him the situation, so that there might be no chance of any trouble with him on this score later on. Some people who knew of Colonel House's trip were not very sanguine of its success. But it went off as smoothly as could have been desired. Mr. Bryan did not then, nor did he later, have any criticism to make upon the personnel of the Cabinet. He acquiesced cheerfully to the President's policies, and to a degree surprising to those who knew him best, effaced his masterful personality and quietly played second fiddle.

He never made any promise or undertaking to Mr. Wilson. Indeed, the President was as much in the dark as anybody else as to what to expect from him. But by his attitude on the question of the Cabinet, and by his quiet support during the first two years of the Administration, he showed clearly his intent. By the time he had grown restless and found it no longer possible to curb his zest for independence of action his power for harm had waned. In the summer of 1913 he might have wrecked the Administration, and, in all probability, Mr. Wilson's future chances. Two years later, Mr. Wilson's power had grown so that the clash with Mr. Bryan was a mere

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

episode, and actually strengthened the President's position by its illustration of Mr. Wilson's fixity of purpose.

One of the few truthful rumors about Colonel House is that he was offered by the President a place in the Cabinet and that he declined it. The President did offer him any portfolio which he preferred, except the Secretaryship of State, which, as has already been stated, was reserved for Mr. Bryan. Colonel House's family were very anxious that he should enter the Cabinet, as were also those of his friends who were aware of the honor the President had conferred upon him. But for the reasons which had prevented him from seeing his way to accept office in the past, as well as because he honestly believed that he could be more helpful in an independent capacity, he refused. When Mr. Wilson pressed him further Colonel House answered that he was willing to do anything to help the Administration, but that he felt sure he could be much more useful to the President, if he was not tied down by a department job of routine. The President, at first, was not disposed to accept Colonel House's view, but after a while he was apparently convinced, and he let the subject drop. Probably nobody is more grateful to-day that Colonel House is not "tied down" to the desk-work of some department than the President.

CHAPTER XIII

HIS PART IN NATIONAL CURRENCY REFORM

IN the fall of 1912, Colonel House closed his home in Austin, and took an apartment in New York, so that he could be close at hand whenever Governor Wilson wished to consult with him. He chose New York, instead of Washington, for a residence, because the climate agreed with him better, and he wished to keep out of the swirl of political intrigue in the national capital. It was during these months following the election that Governor Wilson contracted the habit of coming into New York from Trenton or Princeton to spend the night or weekend with his friend, and it was these visits of the President-elect which began to attract public notice to Colonel House.

Practical politicians immediately concluded that here was a man to be conciliated, and they were quick to endeavor to place their talents at Colonel House's disposition. But for all who came he had a courteous greeting, and not much else. He listened to what they had to say, of course. He is an unusually good listener. But

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

after they had talked their heads off he had only a courteous good-by to reward them with, and the practical politicians went away with a distinct feeling of resentment. They told each other that "this fellow House" was plainly not going to share things; he was going to try "to hog it all for himself." And clumsily, after their own fashion, they sought to start back-fires against him, which either flickered out in the kindling or else spurted flames at the conspirators. It took a long time for the professional politician to have it seeped through his head that Colonel House was not in the game for the purposes which animated him.

It is an open secret that Colonel House's rôle in the Administration at first was that of political next-of-kin to Mr. Wilson, an all-around counselor and conciliator. His wits fairly itched to get at the international problems, which were the most interesting phase of governmental work to him, but he appreciated the need of settling the vital questions of domestic legislation before devoting his attention elsewhere. Mr. Wilson soon discovered how valuable Colonel House could be as a harmonizer of conflicting wills, and how shrewd were his judgments of men and the probable outcome of policies. Many a time, in those days, the President-elect would disappear mysteriously from the Capitol at Trenton and turn

HIS PART IN NATIONAL CURRENCY REFORM

up again at the Pennsylvania Station in New York, bound for Colonel House's apartment in the East Thirties. On his return the newspaper men would demand what had taken him away, but the only answer they would receive would be that he had had "a bully talk with Colonel House"—subject and object not specified.

After Mr. Wilson's inauguration the principal legislative topic of discussion was the new Tariff bill. The impending currency reform legislation, perhaps because of its highly technical character, was not attracting so much notice. Tariff legislation had been agitated for years and was a subject which had contact with every kind of business. It was followed keenly by all classes of citizens and had intelligent appreciation to an extraordinary extent for a matter of such complexity. Also, there were many men in Congress who had studied the whole broad subject of tariff revision and reconstruction at great length. Its path through Congress was fairly smooth.

The contemplated currency reform measure was a horse of another color. It was not understood by the mass of citizens, and it was greeted with an outburst of denunciation and destructive criticism by the people it was to affect most—the bankers. The opposition to it centred in the small group of tremendously powerful bankers in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, who up

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

to this time had successfully dominated the financial operations of the country. They saw in it an assault upon their privileges, a curtailment of what they had looked upon as their rights, a complete reorganization of banking strength which they pretended must be fraught with bitter consequences for the entire economic structure of the nation.

Now, the Currency Reform bill was the project of the Administration in which Colonel House took deepest interest. He was not a banker, you will remember. But for many years he had been studying financial conditions in the United States, and he had come to the conclusion long before this that there was something radically wrong with existing institutions. He had noted the liability of the country at intervals to blind, causeless panics, starting in sudden bursts of unreasoning fear, which swept all before them. He had noted the absence of any concrete financial machinery to be put into use to meet such emergencies. He had noted the unbalanced distribution of banking power and the tendency of the country as a whole to lean on the authority of the group of big bankers in the Eastern cities, with the inevitable result of placing in the hands of these men practically unlimited power for good or ill.

He had discussed the need for financial reor-

HIS PART IN NATIONAL CURRENCY REFORM

ganization with his friend, William Garrett Brown, who was then a regular editorial contributor to *Harper's Weekly*, prior even to his meeting with Mr. Wilson. It was not a new subject to him, and he was delighted to find that the President was thoroughly in accord with his theories for remodeling the existing structure. It should be said here that Mr. Brown, who contributed a number of very valuable ideas to the symposium on financial reform which ultimately went into the Owen-Glass bill, did not live to witness the realization of his ideal of a permanent, unshakable financial organization, which should be as a pillar to support American trade and business. But on his death-bed he received from Colonel House the assurance that the bill would go through, and because he trusted Colonel House, he died happy and satisfied.

When Congress met Colonel House went to Washington and held a conference with Representative Carter Glass, of Virginia, who was to have charge of the projected bill in the House; Senator Owen, of Oklahoma, its sponsor in the Senate, and Secretary McAdoo. These three men went at the problems presented by the bill in very different ways, and each produced suggestions of great value. But none of them contributed more to it as finally enacted than did the President. Indeed, without the President's

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

keen brain and helping hand, the measure might well have failed, or at least, gone through in feebler form. Never was Mr. Wilson's genius for leadership more clearly demonstrated. Colonel House's part in the transaction was, as customary with him, that of bringing opposing views into line, preventing disagreements, and gathering and interpreting advice and criticisms from all classes of men and all parts of the country.

"The whole trouble was that most of those bankers who opposed the bill had not taken the trouble to study it," he said, in discussing the measure. "If they had done so they would soon have seen that the objections they claimed it possessed were not susceptible of proof. The measure is easily understood by one who has the faculty of absorbing such matters and who is willing to devote a little time and study to it.

"I corresponded with bankers and others throughout the country, and I am persuaded that the opposition to it was never so general or so pronounced as some persons would have had us believe. The backbone of the element which opposed the measure was constituted of the small groups of powerful banking interests in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. At the same time, I know of one well-known banker of Boston, a typical representative of the old-school,



A CORNER IN COLONEL HOUSE'S STUDY
WHERE HE INTERVIEWS HIS CALLERS

HIS PART IN NATIONAL CURRENCY REFORM

conservative spirit in banking, who took a broad-minded, patriotic, public-spirited view of the bill. And there were others like him in Philadelphia and New York.

"It was not possible at the time to segregate the opponents and **favorers** of the measure, as some people tried to do, and assert that the bankers who did favor it were to be found in the smaller cities and the rural communities. Many bankers in the big cities, outside of the group I have mentioned, favored the bill. I remember a paper came out once with the assertion that 2,000 bankers opposed the bill, and it made rather a sensation. But a great many more than 2,000 bankers favored and supported the bill, and, what is more important still, the merchants and business men of the country, who were the most affected by it in the long run, were overwhelmingly in favor of it. The same was true of the farmers, although I do not think that they then realized so well as they do now that they would benefit more in proportion by the bill than the merchants and business men."

Every banker of consequence in the country was asked for suggestions to improve the new law, but bankers as a class gave the legislators very little help. Everybody who had any share in putting the bill through was struck by the entire lack of professional breadth of vision

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

demonstrated by many of the so-called "big" bankers. These men seemed to have made no study of the financial problem of the nation in its broader aspects. They were heads of enormously wealthy and successful banks; sure judges of what was "safe paper" and what was not; widely acquainted and possessed of sources of "inside" information in Wall Street. But of the subtle forces which moved behind them and controlled the country's prosperity they appeared to have no adequate conception.

Colonel House tells a story illustrative of the attitude of the conservative banking school toward the bill. He was invited to attend a dinner given by a prominent banker to the heads of a certain group of banks, all of them institutions of ponderous proportions, mentioned in business circles with bated breath, the idea being that an attempt might be made to place the banks' side of the case before him.

"A friend of mine went with me," said Colonel House. "On our way to the dinner he was very gloomy and had little to say. Afterward he confessed that he felt very sorry for me. Well, will you believe me, when I tell you that at the dinner not one of the bankers present had a word to say on the subject of the bill? The entire conversation was conducted between myself and the only other person present who was not a

HIS PART IN NATIONAL CURRENCY REFORM

banker. They let him do all the talking, and he was not a person of any special knowledge regarding banking methods or problems. They were very courteous to me, but they seemed to know nothing about the bill, other than that they did not like it.

"A few days later my host of the dinner called me up and told me that he and his friends, after considering the matter, had decided that they would adopt a resolution condemning the bill and make it public for its effect upon Congress and public opinion. I told him that I hoped he would not pass it for the sake of himself and his friends. 'As a matter of fact,' I said, 'as we stand to-day, your passing this resolution will be of inestimable help to the men who want the bill adopted by Congress. Your resolution will be telegraphed all over the country, and the people in the West and South will look upon it as another proof that the banking interests of the East are the sole obstructors of this legislation. Your opposition is of more help to us than would be your assistance, but my friendly advice to you is to drop your resolution.'

"He said nothing more, but I noticed that the resolution was not adopted and was never made public. Three years later—just a few months ago—this same banker invited me to his house to dinner again; many of the same group of

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

bankers were present. We talked about our previous meeting, and he admitted freely that he had been all wrong in his estimate of the bill. His view had been that they had got along all right under the old financial structure, and they wanted to continue on the same basis. They were afraid of anything new, just because it was new. I asked him if he had not known that our old banking system was the most antiquated in the world, always liable to collapse. He conceded that this was so, but he said we had always managed to weather every storm notwithstanding, and he dreaded a change. This attitude of mind was the chief obstacle.

The general public never heard of Colonel House's connection with the Federal Reserve Bank act, although from his study in New York he kept in constant communication with men and organizations in every State, who were for or against the measure, and he sifted and passed on the comments, critical and commendatory, the suggestions and ideas, which came to him, to the men in Washington who were shepherding the new legislation through Congress. The one thing the President and his advisers feared was a conflict between the House and the Senate. This would have meant the introduction of two separate and irreconcilable bills, with a consequent deadlock, and in the end, no law. But by

HIS PART IN NATIONAL CURRENCY REFORM

conciliation and treaty this danger was eradicated, and slowly, but surely, the dream of a modern, elastic, seaworthy financial structure, built to resist pressure and form a bulwark against panics and scares, was erected into a reality.

The financial history of the United States, since the fall of 1914, a period of singular trial and stress, is the vindication of the Federal Reserve system. It stands out to-day as the most notable domestic accomplishment of the present Administration—by many competent judges being esteemed, indeed, the most constructive piece of legislation ever placed upon the statute-books by Congress.

CHAPTER XIV

FORESEEING THE WORLD WAR

DESPITE preoccupation with domestic legislation during his first year in the White House, President Wilson found opportunity to cast his eye abroad and note the ominous signs in world politics. For none of his policies has he been so bitterly attacked as for his attitude toward Mexico, and his subsequent stand in relation to the European War. At any time he could have silenced his critics off-hand by the simple revelation that so early as the fall of 1913, before anybody else in the world, outside of a handful of generals and politicians in Germany and Austria-Hungary, and the late Lord Roberts, and a few other British thinkers—he and Colonel House, between them, had surveyed the European situation, and perceived that the two opposing groups of powers were drifting toward the war which had been dreaded for a generation.

But Mr. Wilson never made public this fact, although upon it was largely based his Mexican policy of "watchful waiting." Neither has he ever disclosed that in May, 1914, three months

FORESEEING THE WORLD WAR

before war actually broke out, he sent Colonel House to Europe to endeavor to convince the several Governments of Germany, France, and Great Britain of the danger of the existing situation and awaken them to the need of taking steps to clarify the misunderstandings among themselves for the sake, not only of their own peoples, but of the whole world.

It is characteristic of the man's stern self-confidence that he never thought to explain his position or the reasons which had dictated his conduct. He knew that he was right. Knowing that, he was willing to accept criticism, causeless attack, hostile denunciation—yes, even defeat in the election of 1916—rather than stoop to explain, and perhaps weaken his ability to gain the peace for the world which he hoped for up to the very morning that the United States was dragged into the war. Since this country entered the ranks of Germany's enemies, all necessity for silence upon the President's unique vision of Armageddon has ended—if, indeed, there was ever any real necessity, save in Mr. Wilson's close-mouthed austerity and pride, at once his greatest strength and weakness.

Looking over in retrospect the events which excited the anxiety of the President, it does not seem so strange that he should have gauged correctly the drift of international affairs. But we,

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

who look back from the threshold of 1918 upon the turgid years beginning with 1912, have in our possession the keys to modern history, together with information on many secret matters then unknown to the President and his friend. Few Americans at that date had any interest in foreign politics or anticipated that the intrigues and policies of European Governments eventually would draw us from our isolation into the whirlpool of racial animosities across the Atlantic. In 1913 the writing was spread on the wall for the benefit of those who could decipher it, but there was no case of "he who runs may read." Statesmen and legislators, generals and admirals, philosophers and journalists, saw the warning and passed it by. And even when it was read to them they laughed it aside.

The President had a double-barreled interest in European peace. When he took over the Presidency from Mr. Taft, he inherited with it the problem of the Mexican revolution, which became more complicated with the passage of every month. In February, 1913, less than a month before his inauguration, there occurred in Mexico City the revolution headed by the younger Diaz, and General Reyes, known as the "Decina Tragica" from the fearful ruin it wrought in the beautiful Mexican capital. The result was the overthrow of Madero's new Government and the

FORESEEING THE WORLD WAR

installation of Gen. Victoriano Huerta as dictator. Huerta's first act was to countenance—if he did not order—the murder of Madero and Vice-President Pino Suarez by their guards.

Mr. Taft had been scrupulous in the final months of his term to take no step which would embarrass his successor, going so far as to consult with Mr. Wilson on certain vital decisions. Mr. Taft's policy was substantially the policy which Mr. Wilson adhered to so long as it was humanly possible to do so. He kept his hands off Mexican internal affairs, and by strengthening the guard of troops on our side of the border, tried to minimize the chances of complications from Mexican revolutionary and bandit activity close to the line. It was impossible, however, for Mr. Wilson to recognize a government set up in defiance of the Mexican Constitution by such a blood-soaked monster as Huerta, and he did not hesitate to let this fact be known.

Consider for a moment the troubles Mr. Wilson confronted in the first year of his first term. At home he had an untried Cabinet, an unruly Congress, a tremendous legislative program—the most radical which had ever been proposed—and a disunited party. Abroad he could see the preliminary signs of the most horrible catastrophe in the world's history. In Mexico, red anarchy reigned unchecked, with every horror of

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

rapine, arson, assassination, and theft. Americans were being shot, tortured, and mistreated. A considerable section of public opinion in the United States was clamoring for intervention in Mexico. It was a situation to try any man, with all the chances against him if he lost his head—and this new President had lived until he was past fifty in the secluded atmosphere of colleges and universities.

It is significant that the English and French press were foremost in denouncing his Mexican policy during 1913, and up to August, 1914. Then they made an abrupt change of front, which will be referred to again. It is still more significant that the German Minister to Mexico, the notorious Admiral von Hintze, confidant of the Kaiser, chief spy of the German Admiralty, and go-between in the confidential relations of the Kaiser with Czar Nicholas, was the arch trouble-maker between the United States and the Huerta Government. Was Germany then—almost a year before the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne was assassinated in Sarajevo—plotting to keep the United States fully occupied in the Western Hemisphere? Some statesmen think so. There can be no question of her later intrigues after the world war had begun.

Mr. Wilson withstood the attacks upon him for his Mexican policy with his usual impassiveness.

FORESEEING THE WORLD WAR

He was looking beyond Mexico, beyond the immediate future. He wanted, above all things, to keep the country out of hostilities with any Power, large or small. He hoped by peaceful means to be able to hold off and give the Mexicans a chance to adjust their difficulties in their own way. But most of all he wanted to keep his hands free to meet the greater dangers which he could dimly see beyond the horizon. He was not a seer. He had no gift of prophecy. And of course he did not foresee everything which should happen—the full extent of the bloody ruin that was to make of Europe a place of weeping and of the oceans the abode of tragedy. Neither he nor Colonel House then realized the weight of woe impending upon the world.

Their fear was that the war, if it came, would affect the United States mainly by obliging us to meet an increased burden of armaments. Their hope was that we might be able to help the nations of Europe to a speedy peace, to be ready to assist in healing wounds, and to be a moral influence to restrain the aggressors—if, indeed, it proved impossible to prevent hostilities. Let it be remembered by Americans with pride that Mr. Wilson did what no other ruler of the world did in 1914: he strove to prevent war before the war-dogs were loosed. If his efforts had been met

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

with honesty and intelligence, he must have succeeded.

It would require a book to detail the causes of the world war, but the events which immediately forecast it were not numerous. The year 1912 was the most momentous in Europe since 1815 had witnessed the final crushing of the Napoleonic menace. In that year a Greek statesman, Eleutherios Venizelos, succeeded in conciliating the conflicting aims of the different Balkan states, and brought about an alliance against the crumbling power of Turkey. The members of the Balkan Confederation were emboldened to this step by the recent seizure by Austria of the Turkish provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which had been occupied provisionally under the terms of the Treaty of Berlin, and also by the troubles which had beset the Turkish Government since the Young Turks had overthrown Abdul Hamid.

By a swift campaign in the fall of 1912 the Balkan allies crushed the Turkish army at Lule Burgas and Kumanovo, laid siege to the fortresses of Adrianople, Scutari, and Janina, and occupied all of Turkey in Europe up to the Tchaltdja lines guarding Constantinople itself, and the Gallipoli Peninsula. Europe shivered under the shock of these sudden accomplishments. The effects were several. In Germany, the military party viewed with professional appreciation the

FORESEEING THE WORLD WAR

work done by the armies of the Balkan states, which were miniature models of the great conscript armaments of the larger Continental Powers, and the demonstration of the possibilities of the essentially German theory of the offensive capacity of the nation in arms. They had visions of the far wider fields in which they could use the splendid engine of destruction they had created.

In Russia, the exploits of the Southern Slavs were looked upon with parental pride, and from the practical point of view were considered to be of inestimable value as checking the stealthy progress of Austria southwards toward the Ægean Sea. In fact, it was in Austria-Hungary that the events of the first Balkan War were regarded most nervously. Austria experienced an instant reaction. She had millions of Slav subjects, whose racial feelings she did not wish to see aroused by the wave of Pan-Slav sentiment which followed the victories of the Balkan allies. Most of all, she resented the barring to her of the way she had plotted to Salonica. And she dreaded the erection of a hegemony of the Southern Slavs below her Danube frontier, knowing that a permanent military confederacy, such as was talked of exultantly in the Balkan capitals, would be an enemy on her flank if she ever went to war with Russia. Austria mobilized in part, and stood sullenly by while the Balkan allies gar-

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

nered the fruits of their conquests. She longed to strike, but the moment was not propitious.

In union there is strength. In division there is empire. Austrian intrigue set to work to undo what had been accomplished by the valor of the Southern Slavs. The whole story is not known. Perhaps it never will be known. But disputes broke out among the Allies. There were quarrels over territorial questions. The Bulgarians, who had suffered the heaviest fighting, claimed that they should receive a proportionate share of the spoils. Nominally, the Czar worked for peace. Actually, there is ground for the supposition, in view of the disclosures of the "Willy-Nicky papers," that perhaps he lent himself to Teutonic intrigue. Certainly, with the vast prestige he exercised over all the Slavs, it is difficult to believe that he could not have compelled arbitration of the differences between the Allies had he chosen to do so.

The break came in June, 1913, through Bulgarian aggression. The other Allies quickly united against her. Rumania joined in. Turkey seized the opportunity to win back Adrianople, and on August 10 the Treaty of Bucharest, one of the most miserable, unfair, time-serving documents to the credit of the old secret diplomacy, was concluded by force of arms. It left in its track unburied hatreds, national dislikes, unsatis-

FORESEEING THE WORLD WAR

fied ambitions, distortions of territory, all the seeds of future war. It accomplished nothing of what it set out to do. Within three years it was as valuable as the "scrap of paper" that protected Belgium.

By it the second Balkan War was brought to an end, and Turkey in Europe divided up to suit the convenience of the great Powers. But the harm was done. Europe was in a state of high nervous tension. In the spring of 1913, Germany increased her army by 136,000 officers and men and made a proportionate increase in artillery and aircraft, the whole at the cost of \$321,000,000, to be raised by an increased income tax and by direct levies on the various states of the Empire. There was open talk that the sacrifices entailed by the raising of such a sum, in addition to the previous immense taxes, must be rewarded by steps which would make the long continuance of the load unnecessary.

Throughout Germany there was a stiffening of the backs of military men, a loosening of the latent hysteria of their caste, which was demonstrated in the Zabern incident, when a young lieutenant of infantry slashed a cobbler with his sword for laughing at him. The Reichstag passed a vote of lack of confidence in Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg, in consequence of his attitude in submitting to the military in this matter,

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

and friends of Germany pointed to this demonstration of the distaste of the people's representatives for the extreme militarists, as proof of Germany's love of peace and civilization. But the Reichstag's vote had no effect upon a Government which was not responsible to it.

In France the news of the German army increase was heard with apprehension, and the Chamber voted to restore the three-year term of military service, which automatically increased somewhat the strength of the army. But the special budget of \$125,000,000 for increasing armaments and for manufacturing heavy artillery to meet the German increase failed of enactment. The same nervousness was noticeable to close observers in France, but there was no paramount military party to enforce its will upon the Government. Two Ministries, those of Briand and Barthou, tried unsuccessfully to secure the adoption of the additional military budget. There were strikes, outbreaks of syndicalism, and a spread of Socialistic propaganda. Gaston Doumergue, a Socialist-Radical, ended the year as Premier and the additional budget was abandoned.

But it was in Austria that hysteria and excitement were supreme. The Second Balkan War had humiliated Bulgaria and destroyed for the time-being the possibility of a permanent

FORESEEING THE WORLD WAR

Balkan Confederacy. But Servia's ambitions had been swollen enormously by her successes, and the increased territories and population won only served to strengthen the determination of the Servians to work for the unification with them of their blood-brothers who were subjects of Austria. Their desires were reciprocated, and the Government at Vienna saw with alarm the distillation of the spirit of rebellion among the restive Slavs of Bosnia, Herzegovina, Dalmatia, Croatia, Slavonia, and Hungary.

In the East Great Britain, Russia, Germany, and France wrangled over commercial influences in Turkey, the partition of the Bagdad Railway, allotment of zones of influence in Persia. In all these negotiations Germany eyed the other nations askance, jealously convinced that they strove to block her from her long-sought "place in the sun." The year 1913 ended with armies increasing, populations murmuring, and statesmen dealing in expletives and denials.

CHAPTER XV

THE PRESIDENT'S WARNING TO EUROPE

INTERNATIONAL developments of the spring of 1914 served to convince the President of the accuracy of his forebodings. There was no lessening of the tension in Europe, although the peoples of the different countries as a whole were inclined to believe that the situation was less serious than it had been, in consequence of the great Powers having weathered safely the commotion of the two Balkan wars. But underneath the surface of affairs forces were stirring which plotted to drive the nations, whether they wished it or not, to a final trial of arms. In Mexico, too, matters were going from bad to worse, and two weeks before Colonel House sailed from New York on the *Imperator*, of the Hamburg-American Line, on his first trip to Europe for the President, the United States was compelled to seize the port of Vera Cruz.

This incident was not the immediate cause of Colonel House's trip, which had been planned many months before, but it added point to the urgent reasons which impelled the President to

THE PRESIDENT'S WARNING TO EUROPE

make an effort in private to avert the disaster overhanging the world. It is necessary here to rehearse the sequence of events leading up to this step, which was decisive in its effect upon Mexican politics. Mr. Wilson's refusal to recognize Huerta officially had rankled in the heart of the fierce old Indian warrior, and American relations with Mexico had become strained so early as May, 1913, when Huerta made a formal demand for recognition. Mr. Wilson was honestly determined to leave nothing undone to keep clear of intervention, and at different times he sent several emissaries, including John Lind, Dr. William Bayard Hale, and Paul Fuller, to consult with the several Mexican parties in an endeavor to work out some means of adjusting their domestic differences and concluding the peace which Mexico sorely needed.

But his efforts were fruitless, and as anarchy increased its sway, it became necessary to strengthen the American naval forces on the Mexican coast, until by the end of the winter of 1913-14, a number of squadrons of the Atlantic fleet were distributed off Tampico and Vera Cruz. On April 10, 1914, occurred what was known as "the Tampico incident," when a detachment of Mexican soldiers of Huerta's army fired upon an American naval launch flying the American flag. Rear-Admiral Mayo, the senior American naval

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

commander, promptly demanded of the local authorities the traditional apology for such a violation of international courtesy, including a salute to the offended ensign.

In making his demand Rear-Admiral Mayo acted correctly according to the methods of naval practice of the old days, when means of communication were slow and a responsible naval commander at a distance from his Government was supposed in certain exigencies to act upon his own initiative. But Mayo, like some other sailors, did not realize that the old days had passed. The wireless made such off-hand decisions as his unnecessary. In the circumstances the preferable procedure was for him to advise Washington of the insult, report the facts, and await instructions. With the best intentions, he acted as it would have been proper for him to have acted in the early nineties, and so made hay of the President's Mexican policy.

Huerta's best chance of remaining in power was to convince the Mexicans that he was so strong that he was not even afraid of the United States, and Mayo's abrupt demand for an apology was too good an opportunity for him to miss. He quibbled and backed and filled, and at last flatly refused to satisfy the American demands. This was on Saturday morning, April 18, and the President was playing golf when the message was

THE PRESIDENT'S WARNING TO EUROPE

brought to him by Secretary of State Bryan and Mr. Tumulty. Mr. Wilson only finished the thirteenth hole that morning.

The last thing the President wished to do was to commit himself definitely to war with Mexico. To have done so would have been to tie him hand and foot, and to occupy all the country's energies at a time when it was most necessary to keep them free to deal with more important matters. But Huerta's defiance made it absolutely necessary for him to back up Mayo's demand. The country's prestige was at stake. Europe had been sneering at our tolerance of Mexican violence and crime for several years, ignorant that in a few short months Great Britain and France would be prepared to beg us to put up with anything rather than undertake intervention in Mexico, and so rob civilization of the influence of our moral support.

The President had no choice. He had to punish Huerta; he had to show that, even if the United States was long-suffering, there was a point beyond which it could not be provoked. He determined to order the navy to capture Vera Cruz, the principal Mexican port of entry, and establish a blockade of the Mexican coasts, hoping that by going so far he might undermine Huerta's power and compel his retirement—an eventuality which, in itself, would be tantamount

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

to an assertion of American prestige and a proof of the strength we could use if we chose. But he was firm in his purpose not to go any farther, if it could be helped.

As might have been expected, we actually escaped full intervention by a very narrow margin, but narrow as it was, that margin was wide enough for safety. Mr. Wilson's emergency policy was completely successful. On April 21, the bluejackets and marines of the Atlantic fleet seized Vera Cruz and a strip of surrounding territory; a few days later the Fifth Brigade of the regular army, under the late Major-Gen. Frederick Funston, relieved them; and the Americans settled down to a waiting policy, which spelled ruin to Huerta's political chances. There was no aggression against the Mexican people; they were assured that the Americans had come, not to seize their land, but to avenge Huerta's insults. The virus worked with remarkable rapidity. Huerta's prestige was undermined week by week. This man, the Mexican factions began to argue, had defied the Americans to prove his power, and the Americans had crippled him without even going to war, simply by seizing his entry-port and impounding his port-dues. On July 15, 1914, Huerta gave up the unequal struggle in despair, and left Mexico on board the German cruiser *Dresden*, which had been provided for him by his

THE PRESIDENT'S WARNING TO EUROPE

friend, Admiral von Hintze. Strange, is it not, how at every turn the Germans crop up in reviewing our troubles with Mexico?

When Colonel House went abroad early in May the situation at Vera Cruz was still obscure, and nobody could be certain that we should not have to push our intervention and perhaps occupy Mexico City. His departure was not chronicled in the newspapers. The general public were not aware that he had gone until May 27, when a brief cable from Berlin told of a dinner party given in his honor by Ambassador Gerard the night before, at which were present many notables of the German court, including Grand Admiral von Tirpitz and Herr von Jagow, the Foreign Minister. It was taken for granted in this country and abroad that his presence in Europe was for the purpose of defending the President's Mexican policy to foreign governments which had been critical of the disadvantages it had imposed upon their own nationals.

It is true that he did make use of his opportunities to explain the Administration's theories with regard to Mexico, but this was purely subordinate to his main purpose: the direction of the gaze of foreign statesmen to the dangers breeding in their midst. He prepared for his mission with the painstaking forethought which is one of his dominant traits. He knew, for instance, that

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

if any one man could control the destinies of Europe, that man was Kaiser Wilhelm II. And he determined to make his great effort with the Kaiser.

As a preliminary, before he started he read everything worth while about the German ruler, and he talked with every person in this country who knew the Kaiser at all well—men like Benjamin Ide Wheeler, the exchange professors who had served at German universities, and such American statesmen as had visited the German court. None of these men knew the reasons for Colonel House's interest in the Kaiser, but before he left New York he was familiar with Wilhelm II's personality, his tastes, fads, habits, hobbies, pet policies and beliefs, his personal aversions and preferences, the public men and rulers of other countries he liked or disliked. All this information Colonel House had indexed and filed in the wonderful card catalogue that is his mind.

In order that the German Government might have no grounds for suspicion that his ideas had been colored by statesmen in England or France, Colonel House was careful to take his passage on the *Imperator*, a German liner which went direct to Hamburg, and he traveled from Hamburg straight to Berlin. Ambassador Gerard had been apprised of his coming and had arranged in advance a series of meetings, formal and informal,

THE PRESIDENT'S WARNING TO EUROPE

with the various German leaders, which formed the foundation of Colonel House's thorough acquaintance with the psychology of the little group of men who control Germany. On June 1 he had his audience with the Kaiser at Potsdam, an event of surpassing importance, but which was barely referred to in the only other newspaper account of Colonel House's first trip abroad, published on June 7.

The interview with the Kaiser was confidential in character, and in this country, at any rate, its purport is known only to Colonel House and the President. Some day, perhaps, Colonel House's lips will be unsealed, and he will be able to tell the world of the answer he received from the man who, several years before, had sorrowfully told his royal sister, when they met for a private talk in Sweden, that he was no longer the ruler of Germany, that he would lose his throne if he attempted to thwart the military party. It is not the inclination of those who have knowledge of the inside history of the events leading up to the war to place the active responsibility for it upon the Kaiser. Colonel House, like other observers, is disposed to believe that the Kaiser's rôle was negative. He did not wish the war, but he feared to take a positive stand against it, lest he be pushed out of the way by the arrogant

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

clique of generals who flattered the vanity of the Crown Prince.

Colonel House found plenty of evidence in Germany of a state of mind to increase his uneasiness. The military leaders were crazy with excitement; they had been living under high tension since the trouble with France over Morocco, and the disturbed course of the past year had stimulated their hysteria. The generation of generals and marshals who had built up the great German military machine had been subalterns in the War of 1870-71, and they felt themselves growing old, without having had a chance to play with this marvelous toy, this stupendous engine of their own genius. It was theirs, they felt. They had forged it, tempered it, tested it in play. They hated the thought of dying the deaths of old men without the satisfaction of having tried it in battle, under their leadership.

Bizarre as it may seem, this was really the psychology of the German military chieftains in the spring of 1914. They were hungry for war. Their nerves were on edge; they were jumpy. They talked about the "insolence" of the Servians to their ally Austria, of the need to teach Russia a lesson to keep her hands off the Balkans, of the commercial tyranny of England, and the degeneracy of France. They said in so many words: "We have been on the edge of war now

THE PRESIDENT'S WARNING TO EUROPE

for ten years. It has been one incident after another. It has been unhealthy and unsettling. Well, we Germans are ready for war now. We shall never be in better shape for it. Let us end the uncertainty and have war."

Colonel House heard this kind of talk, marked the hysteria in the air. His uneasiness grew to a certain anticipation of trouble, but all his arguments and warnings to German statesmen and politicians were turned aside. They assured him he was mistaken. Yes, there was some unrest. The international situation had gotten on people's nerves. The military men always had to have something to talk about. But war? It would never come unless some other nation saw fit to insult Germany and provoke the Teutonic love of peace too far.

Early in June Colonel House left Berlin for Paris. Here he discovered a totally different atmosphere. France was wrapped up entirely in her own troubles—which were sufficient. In the first six months of 1914 the French democracy was completely absorbed in an extraordinary series of domestic upheavals. But the sensation of the moment was the trial of Madame Caillaux, wife of the Radical Socialist leader, Joseph Caillaux—now charged with treason and conspiracy with the Germans against his own country—for the shooting of Gaston Calmette,

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

editor of *Figaro*, who had been attacking Caillaux's personal and public career in his journal. The Caillaux trial was not an ordinary juridical procedure; it was an affair of parties, a national crisis. Nobody in France, apparently paid heed to what was going on beyond the borders.

French politics were so entangled over the issue as to be almost unintelligible to an outsider. During the first two weeks of June there were three Ministries in the space of eleven days. The Doumergue Ministry resigned on June 3; René Viviani tried to form a new Cabinet, and failed; Delcasse, who had been sacrificed to Germany a few short years before for his bold Moroccan policy, refused the task; Ribot, on June 10, did succeed in forming a Ministry, which resigned three days later for want of a vote of confidence; and finally on June 14, Viviani was able to get together a Ministry strong enough to hold a majority of the Chamber behind it. The influence of Caillaux was seen in these reiterating crises.

To Colonel House, coming from the tense nervousness of Berlin's official circles, it seemed that France must be asleep; and in fact, upon talking with President Poincaré and the more important party leaders and members of the Government, he learned that there was no disposition to anticipate international trouble. The French refused to believe that peace was threatened. They had

THE PRESIDENT'S WARNING TO EUROPE

become used to the rattling of the German saber, and disregarded it with traditional Gallic insouciance. Their attitude was that it was something the Germans could not help doing, any more than they could resist putting up "Verboten" signs about their houses, and that it meant nothing at all. France had no animosities against any other nation, they insisted. She had demonstrated this in her various minor troubles with Germany in the past decade. She had always been eager to meet the Germans more than half-way. No, now that the Balkans had been quieted again, there was a chance for the world to sit back and catch its breath.

More than half-convinced by the sanity with which the French statesmen talked and acted, and their whole-hearted absorption in home affairs, Colonel House left Paris for London. This was about the middle of June. In London he encountered an atmosphere similar to that which prevailed in Paris. The members of the British Government were blind to the dangers which had seemed so plain to the American's detached perspective. They, like the French, were immersed in domestic politics. Rebellion and civil war impended in Ireland, where Ulster and the south armed against one another and the home Government. The army was racked by intrigue. The

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

suffragettes were raising hob. Industrial unrest was flaming up in many sections.

Colonel House was listened to with respect as the personal representative of the President, but British statesmen refused to take him seriously. They told him that so long as men like Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg, Foreign Minister von Jagow, and Dr. Solf, the Colonial Minister, were in office in Berlin, it would be impossible for Germany to go to war. The present German Government was eminently a peace Government, they insisted. Why, the mere continued presence in London of that stanch friend of England, Prince Lichnowsky, the German Ambassador, was a proof of peaceable intentions. Lichnowsky would never permit a break with England. Germany had no reason for war with England. The relations of the two countries had never been better.

All the members of the British Ministry were convinced that the world's peace was secure. It would be necessary for the Germans to have a change of Ministry before they could make war, the British statesmen asserted. And a change of ministry would be a warning, which could be heeded. They did not know, as the world knows now, that the real power in Germany was the military party, which could compel the Kaiser himself, to its will, and enforce the policy of any ministry for peace or war. They were ignorant.

THE PRESIDENT'S WARNING TO EUROPE

as are most well-informed people to-day, that in Germany the interests of the Hohenzollerns are subordinated to the interests of the Army—which means the military clique in control; that if it came to a conflict between the dynasty and the military leaders the dynasty would have to give way.

The British were persuaded of Germany's honesty of purpose, and so genuine was their attitude that for the time being they stifled Colonel House's suspicions. But on June 28 a Servian madman named Gavril Prinzip shot and killed the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, and his wife, the Countess Sophie Chotek, as they rode in state through Sarajevo in Bosnia. The German militarists had ready to hand the excuse they had been looking for.

CHAPTER XVI

AMERICA FACE TO FACE WITH WAR

COLONEL HOUSE, himself, was amazed at the rapidity with which Europe was plunged into war. The assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand was exactly the kind of spark in the tinder-box which he had warned the foreign governments to beware of, but the resulting explosion was far worse than he had anticipated. Indeed, what man had dreamed of such an international conflagration as swept Europe during the first three days of August, 1914? Not even the German military leaders could have foreseen the extent of the reaction to their intrigues in Europe and beyond the seas. Had they obtained a bare glimpse of the agonies to which their policy would lead their own country and the inevitable defeat it meant for Germany's commercial and financial ambitions, surely they would have hesitated and held their hands.

There was no indication in the summer and fall of 1914 that the United States was in danger of being swept into the maelstrom of the

AMERICA FACE TO FACE WITH WAR

war. The only effect of the catastrophe upon this country which was apprehended by the President and Colonel House, as said before, was the possibility of an increase in the staggering load of armaments imposed upon the United States in common with other nations. Like most well-informed observers, they looked to see an end to hostilities after a few months of swift fighting. The main exertion of the Administration was devoted to limiting, so far as possible, the economic strain upon the United States and doing what it could to relieve suffering abroad.

In accordance with his desire to use every resource permitted by international courtesy, Mr. Wilson on August 5, addressed an identic message to the Kaiser Wilhelm II, the Kaiser Franz Joseph, the Czar Nicholas, President Poincaré and King George V, offering his services "as official head of one of the Powers signatory to the Hague Convention . . . to act in the interest of European peace, either now or at any other time that might be thought more suitable, as an occasion to serve you and all concerned in a way that would afford me lasting cause for gratitude and happiness."

So early did Woodrow Wilson give voice to the creed which has animated him in his conduct of the nation's international relations throughout the most painful years of the world's history.

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

For that statement, contained in his first message to the rulers of Europe, in its succinct phrase comprised the root and sinew of the policy which has inspired his every later act. It is at the basis of the policy he pursues to-day, although, thanks to the lawless aggression of the German Government, he speaks now with far greater authority than would have been the case had he met with success in 1914.

Although the Administration did not foresee the future developments which were to draw us into collision with German ambitions, it was manifest that ordinary prudence required us, in such unsettled times, to steer clear of trouble in Mexico. Huerta's resignation of power on July 15 and departure from the country had satisfied the original purpose for which we seized Vera Cruz, and while Mexico's internal conditions were far from satisfactory, it was decided to withdraw the expeditionary force at Vera Cruz as rapidly as possible. General Funston embarked his troops and turned the town over to the local authorities on September 15. The instant result was an extension of the spirit of anarchy, and a division of the revolutionary forces which had been fighting Huerta into two opposing parties, headed respectively by Villa and Carranza.

His Mexican policy was Mr. Wilson's *bête*

AMERICA FACE TO FACE WITH WAR

noir from that day forth. He was accused of vacillation, uncertainty, cowardice, and even duplicity. He was hammered for it relentlessly by enemies of widely opposite views. It came near wrecking his Presidential candidacy in the 1916 campaign. But he knew that the United States was the one firm anchor of civilization in 1914, the one great Power of the West that had escaped the clutch of war, the one disinterested voice to speak to the rest of mankind with the language of common brotherhood and humanity. And once we were involved in war—especially a war, no matter how just our motives might be, with a neighboring and weaker nation—our influence for peace and justice must be immeasurably diminished.

It is Mr. Wilson's great virtue that his self-confidence, founded upon belief in the righteousness of his views, remains with him under any storm of criticism. But his patience and his confidence were sorely tried in those black years which stretch behind us. It required all his strength of will to meet the storm and not to shrink before the hail of shafts barbed with malice and partisanship.

The first hint of future trouble in American relations with Germany came in an interview with Grand Admiral von Tirpitz, then Minister of Marine at Berlin, published in the London

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

Daily Mail of December 22, 1914, in which he advocated the inauguration of submarine attacks upon British commerce as an offset to the strangling effect of the British blockade of Germany. Von Tirpitz admitted frankly the impotency of the German navy against the British fleet, the futility of Zeppelin raids, and the trifling Allied shipping losses from surface raiders. But the submarine, he contended, could change all this, and by its use Germany would be able to neutralize Great Britain's command of the seas.

This interview was only a paragraph in length and excited comparatively little attention. There was no extensive comment upon it, and the day after it was printed the man in the street had forgotten it. But official information from Germany convinced the Administration that von Tirpitz was not making idle threats. To gauge the situation correctly, it is necessary to analyze the German state of mind at this stage of the war. After the battle of the Marne and the retreat of the German armies to the Aisne and the subsequent failure of the Germans to break down the opposition of the French and British troops to their advance upon the Channel ports, it became apparent to the President and Colonel House—as it did to practically every unprejudiced person who had facilities for knowing the inside facts—that Germany had shot her bolt.

AMERICA FACE TO FACE WITH WAR

What was much more important, the German military leaders came to the same realization at the same time, and they were frightened into a momentary meekness. There was still enough common-sense in military circles to perceive the enormous expense of a prolongation of war on such a gigantic scale. They felt that they had failed, and they were willing to grasp any opportunity of escape from the situation in which they found themselves. Plainly speaking, they were in a condition bordering on panic. The plans of campaign they had been maturing for a generation had failed. They totalled up the manpower, the productive capacity, and natural resources of the Entente Allies, and admitted to themselves, with sinking hearts, that if their enemies hung together there could be but one issue to the conflict. In their hopelessness they were willing to make peace on terms which would have surprised the Entente.

But, of course, the leaders of the Entente had been making the same calculations as the German Great General Staff, and they were highly satisfied with the figures which they worked out. It was obvious, they decided, that in a year or so, when their maximum power began to tell, they could crush Germany and Austria, and in that event, of course, be able to exact whatever terms they chose. Peace was

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

very far from the thoughts of the statesmen in London and Paris, and it was not very long before the Germans discovered, through the medium of their diplomats in neutral countries, that their overtures would meet with ignominious refusal. This knowledge inspired in Germany a desperation which was prompted by the belief that the Empire—and especially the military party—was menaced by such national humiliation as was visited on France in 1871. Animated by this belief, the military leaders succeeded in working, not only themselves, but all classes of the population up to a white heat of fanatic resolution, and extremists like Tirpitz and Hindenburg were listened to with increasing respect.

The intelligence which reached him concerning conditions in the belligerent countries in the winter of 1914-1915 determined the President to dispatch Colonel House on a second mission to Europe, for the purpose of feeling out the general situation and plumbing the minds of the leaders on both sides. Incidental to this, Colonel House was supposed to investigate the possibilities of reaching some arrangement whereby the use of the submarine might be restricted, or perhaps even the entire system of maritime warfare and reprisals might be readjusted between the belligerents. But Mr. Wilson had no reason to

AMERICA FACE TO FACE WITH WAR

anticipate the sudden announcement of the German submarine zone, which was the opening move in von Tirpitz's campaign.

Colonel House sailed from New York on January 30, 1915, on board the *Lusitania*. It was on this trip that the big Cunarder flew the American flag in passing through the waters adjacent to the British Isles—although Colonel House did not know it at the time—which was one of the excuses given by the German Government for sinking her several months afterward. While no public explanation of the incident was made, it has always been supposed that Captain Dow, of the *Lusitania*, took this unusual step for the protection of Colonel House. Passengers who were aboard on the voyage in question testified to the skipper's unusual nervousness, induced by the fact that submarines already were active off the mouth of the Mersey, and decided that he resorted to American colors in the belief that it was a justifiable device to shield the person of the American envoy.

The newspapers had it that Colonel House was going abroad to assist Herbert Hoover in coördinating the work of Belgian relief, and, as this was a most convenient means of cloaking the real purpose of his visit, the story was allowed to stand—indeed, tacitly encouraged. But the news of his arrival in London on February 6

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

started a report in this country that he had been sent by the President to make an effort to bring the combatants to terms. It was necessary for the President to make an official denial of this story on February 9. The President and Colonel House knew far better than did the general public the psychology of the hostile nations. The Allies, after their experience with German methods, were in no mood to consider peace at that moment. The Germans were flogging themselves to battle fury in the conviction that they must conquer or be wrecked as a great Power.

While Colonel House was at sea von Tirpitz and his friends induced the civil government in Berlin to acquiesce in their program for a submarine offensive to cripple British economic efficiency. In the first week of February Germany issued an official proclamation declaring the waters surrounding the British Isles, within certain specified degrees of latitude and longitude, to be a war zone, through which neutral shipping could venture only at their own peril after February 18. Abuse of neutral flags by British merchantmen, acting under orders of the British Government, was assigned as the reason for the sweeping nature of the measure. Unofficially, American newspaper correspondents were assured that the order was not a blockade

AMERICA FACE TO FACE WITH WAR

and that no hostile action against neutral ships was contemplated.

In London the news was received with mingled resentment and amusement, but British officials were no more inclined to take it seriously, now that it was a reality, than they had been when it was still a matter of debate in Germany. They viewed it as an indication of the extremities to which Germany was driven, but they discounted or failed to take into account the reserve power which German resourcefulness could muster and the weak links in the chain they and their Allies were welding around the Central Powers.

This was the situation when Colonel House arrived in London; and in the course of two or three weeks, in conversations with the leading British statesmen of all parties, he did what he could to convince them of the dangers inherent in it and the advisability of meeting Germany part way. But all through the first two years of the war Britain was convinced of the invulnerability of her isolation and the paralyzing power of her fleet.

They scouted the possibility of grave losses to their merchant marine from submarine warfare, and they refused to believe that Germany would run the risk of offending friendly nations by depredations upon neutral shipping. They had no proper understanding of the desperate char-

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

acter of the power arrayed against them. Englishmen did not realize that the dominant military party in Germany, having brought on a war more inclusive and terrible than they had expected, were fighting with their backs to the wall, in the knowledge that their only hope of perpetuating their control of German affairs was to win what would pass for a victory, and that this military party would stop at nothing to achieve victory. It was only a few days later that the German use of poison gas at Ypres shocked a world which had fancied itself inured to barbarity in war. But even then the statesmen in London smilingly refused to believe that the German submarine was to be the most deadly engine they would have to face.

CHAPTER XVII

"THE FREEDOM OF THE SEAS"

FROM London Colonel House went to Paris, where he conferred with President Poincaré and the principal French Ministers. He found Paris much more alive to the serious aspect of affairs than London, but the French Government's views on the new submarine warfare were colored by London's optimistic attitude and the magic prestige of the British navy. The absence of any marked disposition toward peace did not surprise him. He had expected that. The French were still braced by the memory of their triumph at the Marne; the difficulties of trench warfare were not yet appreciated; and the Allies had suffered none of the galling reverses which were to sap their resources and striking power, and steel the nerve of the German people to withstand the hardships of a nation besieged. If peace or any amelioration of the submarine war at sea were to be obtained, it was manifest that the opening wedge must be driven at Berlin.

On March 19, Colonel House arrived in the

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

German capital, after a short stay in Switzerland. He was the guest of Ambassador Gerard, and he met a second time the statesmen he had tried to persuade in the previous May to move to prevent the bursting of the war-cloud—among others, the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Zimmermann, who was to make the ridiculous attempt to ally Mexico and Japan with Germany against the United States, in January, 1917, and who was then one of the strongest men in Germany by reason of his alliance with the extremists of the military party and the advocates of ruthlessness at the Admiralty, headed by von Tirpitz. With these men and others, Colonel House undertook to argue the advantages of moderation, and the harm that must ensue if yet more nations should be arrayed with Germany's enemies.

They gave him fair words, but no satisfaction, until he extended, as a fisherman casts his bait, a certain phrase of five words: "The Freedom of the Seas." So far as can be determined, Colonel House was the first to use this much-debated phrase, at least in its connection with the problems raised by the present war. No previous mention of it has been found. It met with prompt response.

"Ah," said the German statesmen, "you mean

"THE FREEDOM OF THE SEAS"

the general recognition of the Declaration of London?"

But Colonel House meant much more than this. He meant a literal, unlimited freedom of the seas, which would imply the safety of merchantmen in enemy ports on the declaration of war; the safety not only of food cargoes, but cargoes of actual contraband; the uninterrupted progress of the world's ocean-borne commerce in the midst of the most widely dispersed war. It was, in effect, an extension to the utmost limits of the American doctrine of the exemption from capture of private property. Accepted by the belligerent nations, it would have the immediate result of confining the war to a struggle between fleets and armies and exempting from harm non-combatants and neutral nations, while the economic structure of civilization would survive almost unimpaired. Inevitably, such a policy would operate to restrict the waging of war on a national scale.

"But for what would navies be used, then?" demanded the Germans.

"For defense against invasion," returned Colonel House.

A vista opened before the eyes of the leaders at Berlin which they had abandoned hope of seeing. Perhaps they were purely selfish and cynical in their acceptance of this doctrine of

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

idealism; perhaps they thought only of the nullification of the preponderating naval power of Great Britain, and the abolition of the blockade which was cutting off Germany from her sources of raw material. But Colonel House saw much further than they did. He saw that international recognition of a real freedom of the seas would react quite as much to the advantage of Germany's enemies as to her own, in that it would free the British Isles of all fear of economic famine and leave the British merchant marine free to pour foodstuffs, munitions, and supplies into France. And even beyond that, he saw that the acceptance by all the nations of the freedom of the seas would be an important step—the most important step next to the setting up of a League of Nations—toward the abolition of war.

At any rate, the immediate effect of his suggestion of the doctrine in Berlin was to obtain the prompt and enthusiastic assent of Germany.

"I believe you have thrown the first thread across the chasm which bars us from peace," said one of the greatest men in Germany.

Having achieved his purpose in Berlin, Colonel House returned to London to take up the far more arduous task of arguing the British leaders into an appreciation of the advantages which would accrue to them from accepting the new

“THE FREEDOM OF THE SEAS”

idea. Imagine his vexation, when, upon his arrival in London, he encountered reports in the English newspapers of boastful speeches in favor of “the freedom of the seas,” as he had outlined it, which had been delivered in the United States by Ambassador von Bernstorff and Dr. Bernhard Dernburg, the former German Colonial Secretary and chief propagandist in America. The first act of the German Government after Colonel House outlined his doctrine had been to cable instructions to their agents in the United States to bolster it by a vigorous campaign of propaganda—a typical piece of German diplomatic stupidity.

Of course, the minute Colonel House mentioned “the freedom of the seas” in London, British statesmen smiled knowingly and said:

“Oh, yes, that is the newest thing in Berlin. Some more deviltry they are up to.”

Colonel House had the utmost difficulty in breaking down the wall of natural suspicion which met him at every turn when he undertook to preach his doctrine. But he collected his proofs and showed conclusively that while he had suggested the idea in Berlin on such-and-such a day, the speeches had been delivered in America on subsequent dates. Even so, “the freedom of the seas” was a phrase from which the Englishman shied instinctively.

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

"What do you mean by it?" they would say. "The freedom of the seas? Is not that what England has always fought for, since the days of the Armada? Is not that what the British navy is maintained for? Or do you mean that we should surrender our coaling stations and ports and colonies, which are open to all the nations of the world, as well as to our own shipping?"

Very slowly, however, Colonel House made his point and drove it home, and Englishmen of liberal views began to endorse it.

"The freedom of the seas, as you outline it, would be of 60 per cent. advantage to the United States, 100 per cent. advantage to Germany, and 120 per cent. advantage to the British Empire," pronounced one English statesman.

In fact, despite all the opposition which his suggestions encountered, and the hampering clutch of German stupidity, Colonel House's efforts soon bore fruit, as was evidenced by the speech delivered by Sir Edward Grey—now Lord Grey—Minister for Foreign Affairs, in the House of Commons, in which the remarkable concession was made by this spokesman of the British Ministry that "the freedom of the seas" was considered a debatable question.

Here, then, was in process of construction a basis for negotiation, which might have supported substantial work for peace. But in the

“THE FREEDOM OF THE SEAS”

moment of fruition Colonel House's plans were destroyed by the news that the *Lusitania* had been sunk on May 7, 1915, by a German submarine off the coast of Ireland, with a loss of 1,200 non-combatants, including more than 100 Americans. By that deed Germany placed herself outside the pale of civilization, and ruined the promising chances of escape from the British blockade which Colonel House had offered her. There was nothing for him to do but return home.

The sinking of the *Lusitania* was precisely the contingency Colonel House had foreseen in Germany's reckless disregard of international law at sea. The dangers inseparable from submarine warfare had been drawn to the attention of the German Government by the United States in a note of February 10, immediately upon receipt of the proclamation of the war zone around the British Isles. In this preliminary note, Secretary Bryan had warned the German Government that “if the commanders of German vessels of war should act upon the presumption that the flag of the United States was not being used in good faith and should destroy on the high seas an American vessel or the lives of American citizens, it would be difficult for the Government of the United States to view the act in any other light than as an indefensible violation of neutral

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

rights. If such a deplorable situation should arise the Imperial German Government can readily appreciate that the Government of the United States would be constrained to hold the Imperial Government of Germany to a strict accountability for such acts of their naval authorities, and to take any steps it might be necessary to safeguard American lives and property and to secure to American citizens the full employment of their acknowledged rights on the high seas."

At the same time, and under the same date, Secretary Bryan sent a note to the British Government requesting that care be used to avoid the systematic display of the American flag by British merchantmen in the war zone.

This was to keep the slate clean, to allow Germany no chance to claim that any step had been left untaken to prevent a breach between her and the United States. She was warned repeatedly in notes from the Department of State; she was warned at every opportunity by Ambassador Gerard.

Colonel House's fears for the future were intensified by the unsatisfactory issue of the *Lusitania* controversy and the disinclination of Germany to make full admission of its lawless conduct. To aggravate the situation, on August 19, several days before the German Government finally agreed to make reparation for the *Lusi-*

“THE FREEDOM OF THE SEAS”

tania outrage, the breach between the two countries was widened by the torpedoing, under similar circumstances, of the White Star liner *Arabic*, with the loss of a number of innocent lives.

But the spontaneous outburst of indignation in the United States, which followed the news of the sinking of the *Arabic*, had a salutary effect in Berlin. At that time Germany was not yet prepared to dare the anger of the whole civilized world, and moreover, Gottlieb von Jagow, the Foreign Secretary, was a consistent and fearless foe of the doctrine of frightfulness preached by Grand Admiral von Tirpitz and his supporters at the Admiralty and in the Great General Staff. Berlin allowed it to become known that orders had been issued to submarine commanders, modifying their previous instructions, and that they were ordered to spare passenger liners when there was any question of inability to save all the company.

But the official note of the German Government, in reply to the representations of our Government regarding the destruction of the *Arabic*, was no more conciliatory in tone than had been the specious expressions of regret for the Lusitania tragedy. With cool impudence, the excuse was offered that the submarine had torpedoed the *Arabic* because the German commander thought

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

that the liner intended to ram him—a falsehood which was demonstrated beyond contention by numerous affidavits of survivors.

It speedily became plain to the German Government, however, that the United States meant business, and von Jagow was able to muster enough backing to resist the pressure of the militarists and the Tirpitz group. On October 5 Count von Bernstorff, German Ambassador at Washington, addressed a letter to the Secretary of State announcing that his Government had instructed him to “disavow” the sinking of the *Arabic* and offer reparation.

CHAPTER XVIII

PROBLEMS RAISED BY THE SUBMARINE

THE perplexities of the Administration's position during the first year of the war are strikingly illustrated by the following quotation from an article in the London *Spectator*:

"President Wilson has made the fatal mistake of letting himself be governed by words, or rather by a word, rather than by actualities. President Wilson at the very beginning of the war determined he would maintain 'a strict neutrality.' Unfortunately, he failed to think out accurately and clearly what was the true meaning of neutrality. He let the word run away with him. It is an awful thing, a wicked thing, a thing contrary to the usages of civilized nations, to harry a country as Belgium has been harried, to shoot hostages by the hundreds as they have been shot in Belgium, and to give up whole cities to military execution because a few men not in uniform lost their heads and fired at the soldiers who were invading their country. But mum's the word, for to condemn these things as they ought to be condemned would be in effect

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

hostile to Germany, if she did them, and would show that we were not strictly neutral.

"President Wilson will go down to history as a man on whom fate has been specially hard. But for this war the world would probably have regarded him as one of America's greatest and most high-minded statesmen. As it is, the verdict of the world will be like that of Tacitus on the Roman Emperor. Every one would have deemed Wilson capable of nobly filling his high office had not he been tried in the fire of a great crisis. Political luck never struck a man harder than it struck him."

It would be interesting to compare this expression of opinion with any mention of the President in the columns of the *Spectator* in the past year.

The truth is, of course, that no matter what Mr. Wilson's feelings were with regard to German lawlessness in the early part of the war, the state of public opinion in the United States positively precluded all idea of our intervention. There was a very active pro-German party, as well as a pro-Ally party, but the great mass of the population, untrained in the intricacies of international politics, took little practical interest in the elements of right and wrong in the European struggle. Mr. Wilson and his advisers sensed this condition, and they knew that

PROBLEMS RAISED BY THE SUBMARINE

it would be the height of recklessness to allow the country to be forced into a war for which there was no popular demand. The duty of the Administration, as Colonel House saw it, was to preserve the Republic from foreign entanglements, if possible; to steer clear of war, if peace could be maintained with honor, and to stand firmly for international justice in so far as it was compatible with our traditional policies.

Colonel House always hoped for the best because, when the war began, nobody imagined either that it would involve so many nations or that Germany would run amuck. And each fresh act of oppression or lawlessness was met in the spirit of cool impartiality, based on the feeling that so extraordinary a struggle had bred unnatural instincts and antagonisms in men's breasts, and that therefore it was necessary to make allowance for the unusual stirring of human passions. It was only gradually that hope of preserving peace was abandoned, and to the very end the policy was followed of giving Germany one chance more.

Private information reaching the Administration from Berlin in the fall of 1915, and the continued operations, even though restricted, of the German submarines, provided fresh cause for foreboding in Washington. A situation was forming which gave promise of becoming im-

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

possible for neutral nations. Toward the end of December the President determined to send Colonel House abroad again, and he sailed from New York on December 28 on board the Holland-America liner Rotterdam, having with him as fellow-passenger Capt. Karl Boy-Ed, German naval attaché at Washington, who had been recalled at the request of the United States in consequence of his unneutral activities.

In Washington the same crop of rumors heralded Colonel House's departure as had attended his previous trip in the spring. It was asserted at once that he was going to canvass and report on the prospects of peace, and when this was denied by the President, Secretary Lansing, and Colonel House himself, a new rumor gained circulation to the effect that our Ambassadors in the several European capitals were squabbling, and Colonel House was being dispatched abroad "to spank them all soundly and put them to bed." It will be observed that he was still regarded by the rumor-mongers of the capital as a glorified messenger-boy or bearer of the bow-string for the President.

Nobody paid much heed to Colonel House's own statement of his purposes:

"I am going to Europe at the request of the President and Secretary of State. My task will be to take information to some of our Ambassa-

PROBLEMS RAISED BY THE SUBMARINE

dors in order that they may have a more intimate knowledge of this Government's attitude regarding certain phases of pending international questions and in order to obtain from them their personal point of view."

This was quite correct, but, of course, the most important object he had in view was an adjustment of the submarine problem which would allow the United States and other neutrals to preserve their dignity and lawful freedom of movement on the seas. Any sign of a disposition for peace Colonel House would have jumped at, but the President did not need to give him implicit instructions on this point, for Mr. Wilson knew that his friend saw eye to eye with him where peace was concerned. The problem in launching discussions of peace was to move without embarrassing either of the belligerents, and the opportunity for such a move had not presented itself.

— On this trip, for the first time, Colonel House was formally accredited as a diplomatic agent of the United States Government, this step having been taken in consequence of an agitation, engineered by certain enemies of the Administration, who had dug up a musty statute known as the Logan Law, enacted in the infant days of the Republic, to prohibit the conducting of negotiations with foreign Governments by a person who was

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

not officially accredited to act for the United States. Several of the foreign diplomats in Washington had been much exercised over this matter, and it was thought best to observe the requirements of the law, even if there was some doubt of its application in the case at issue. But Colonel House was not paid for his services by the State Department, as was alleged at the time.

He visited again London, Paris and Berlin. In Europe the true object of his mission was no more known than at home in America. There was much speculation in all foreign countries, and the universal conclusion was that he was on a peace mission.

In London he found the Cabinet in process of solution, and things so unsettled that it was impossible to talk definitely or with persons who possessed the authority to act and decide policies. But British statesmen individually were still skeptical of the danger of the submarine warfare, although somewhat more inclined to the idea of compromise, after the months of hard fighting just past. When he suggested the possibility of relaxing the food blockade of Germany, in return for a mitigation of submarine activities, their attitude was distinctly cordial. The gist of the general discussion of terms which Colonel House conducted was that the British

PROBLEMS RAISED BY THE SUBMARINE

would agree to pass food cargoes for neutral countries adjoining Germany.

Much encouraged by this tentative concession, Colonel House journeyed on to Berlin and inquired what Germany would offer in return. But the German Government was disposed to call for a high bid. As a preliminary to any relaxation of the submarine campaign, beyond their pledge to spare passenger liners, they demanded that the British should pass supplies of raw materials likewise consigned to neutral countries. Inasmuch as it would have been impossible for the Allies to agree to this, without nullifying the military effect of their blockade, the prospective compromise came to nothing. Colonel House did not even bother to give the details of the German reply to his friends in London and Paris. He knew it would be useless.

The Germans were more confident than ever. They had just smashed the Servian army and occupied practically all of Servia, while by bringing Bulgaria into alliance with them, they had opened up that "corridor" through middle Europe which linked them to Turkey and the Near East. The Allies were equally assured. The Servian *débâcle* was the first of their great mistakes, and they were busily concentrating an army at Salonica, with which they expected to reconquer the occupied territory and drive across

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

the Danube in collaboration with a Russian offensive from the East into Hungary. Peace was farther away from Europe at that time than it had ever been. Before the disastrous Serbian campaign, Germany was inclined to talk small. Now Germany felt herself distinctly top-dog.

Colonel House did what he could. He tried to convince both sets of belligerents of the advantage to each of them in keeping the United States out of the war. And, on the other hand, the British and French were equally anxious to convince him that we should not become involved in hostilities with Mexico. People and newspapers, who, a year and a half previously, had been ranting at Mr. Wilson and the Administration for their slackness, now bore away on the opposite tack. Colonel House was begged to beware of the German intrigues in Mexico, designed to occupy our attention and cause the deflection to our own uses of the stores of ammunitions, arms, and war supplies flowing across the Atlantic.

In reply he assured the British and French diplomats that we had no intention to tie ourselves to a war with Mexico if it could be avoided, and he took advantage of their arguments to point out to them how equally it was to their interests to do what they could to keep us from being dragged into the European war. In that case, he said, just as surely as if we were

PROBLEMS RAISED BY THE SUBMARINE

committed to a Mexican campaign, the French and British armies would lose the supplies they were drawing from us—supplies which were of paramount importance to them because they had not yet been able fully to organize their own manufacturing resources.

He also reassured them when they expressed fear of the possible results of the elaborate system of German propaganda which was built up in the United States during the first two years of the war. Instead of fearing this propaganda, Colonel House told them, they should view its activities with satisfaction. The worst possible thing they could do, he declared, was to attempt to meet it by a campaign of their own. In that case, the Germans would have something definite to which they might hitch their onslaughts. As it was, the strongest impression was made upon the American people by the dignified silence of the Allied Governments, and hundreds of American leaders of thought and opinion were ready to refute voluntarily every German charge and boast. The Germans were wrecking their hold on America's good opinion, and they could be relied upon to ruin themselves in this wise quickest by their own unaided efforts.

When he went to Germany Colonel House labored to convince the statesmen at Berlin of the harm they were suffering from the policy of

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

frightfulness practiced by their army and navy commanders. He told them that Germany was merely making commercial enemies by her onslaughts upon neutral shipping, by her ruthlessness, and by her disregard of international law. He told them that their air raids upon London and other English towns were a crowning piece of foolishness, that the only material result had been to add 1,000,000 men to the ranks of Britain's volunteer armies. He said that one objection the British Government had to the raids was the limited sphere of operation of the German airmen. The raids were confined to the eastern counties, where every able-bodied man had enlisted, and recruiting officers were confident that if some raiders would only visit other parts of England equally satisfactory results could be obtained there.

To the credit of the civilian heads of Germany, Colonel House's arguments had effect and they pledged their endeavor to dissuade the military chiefs from such methods of warfare. But the military commanders would not yield. They brushed aside the arguments presented to them and went cheerfully ahead with their frightfulness and their faith in the persuasiveness to peace of unchecked atrocities.

Colonel House returned to the United States early in March, 1916. His trip had not been so

PROBLEMS RAISED BY THE SUBMARINE

successful as he had hoped, but it had been productive of much of value. It had placed him—and through him, the President—in intimate touch with the feeling prevailing in the different capitals of the countries at war. It had enabled him to convince the statesmen in Berlin that the Administration at Washington was in earnest in its intent to uphold the existing structure of international law, and that while American patience might be long-drawn out, there must come a time when it would yield to action, if it was pushed too far. It had brought the various American embassies in closer touch with the home Government and allowed an exchange of ideas impossible through the medium of the cable.

Coming, then, upon the heels of Colonel House's visit to Berlin, the torpedoing on March 24, 1916, of the steamer *Sussex* in the English Channel, with Americans on board, was nothing less than an open defiance to public opinion in the United States. And so Mr. Wilson interpreted it. On April 19, he addressed the two Houses of Congress, reading to them in a special message, the text of a note which he had just addressed to Germany, the terms of it practically amounting to an ultimatum. Germany tried to evade responsibility for the act, claimed at first that the *Sussex* must have been sunk by a mine;

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

next that no German submarine could have sunk the *Sussex*; and finally, that it was true a German submarine had sunk a vessel in the vicinity in which the *Sussex* was attacked, but that it was not the same craft.

These evasions were swept sternly aside by the President, and Germany was compelled to admit, not only that a German submarine had attacked the *Sussex*, but also the number of the submarine and the identity of her commander. Germany was obliged to disavow the act, to promise to punish the officer in command, and to agree to modify still further her attacks upon shipping, although, in making this promise, she implied that it was conditional to some degree upon the utilization of the good efforts of the United States to induce the British Government to accept peace.

Thanks in part to Colonel House's visit to Berlin, and to the sterling work of Ambassador Gerard, the more level-headed German statesmen, who realized the mistake of estranging the United States, were able to defeat the advocates of ruthlessness on the *Sussex* issue, and actually there seemed to be more chance than ever in the spring of 1916 that we might be successful in compelling Germany to recognize our rights and so avoid participation in the war.

CHAPTER XIX

PRESIDENT WILSON'S SECOND CAMPAIGN

PRESIDENT WILSON entered the campaign of 1916 with the chances distinctly against him. The man in office who runs for re-election is always at a disadvantage as compared with his opponent. His record is fixed and known; his inevitable mistakes are glaringly apparent; if his opponent is a man of political sagacity, he is forced upon the defensive from the day of his nomination. This was the situation in which Mr. Wilson found himself. No President since Abraham Lincoln had been confronted by so many varied and perplexing problems. Time and again in his first term he had been compelled to choose between two courses of action, with the knowledge that no matter which way he directed his steps he would encounter bitter denunciation. The many pieces of constructive legislation to his credit were ignored by his political enemies for the sake of making capital out of policies regarding which there were essentially different points of view.

His lofty idealism, his steadfast repudiation of

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

the sordid forces of misrule, his unyielding resistance to reactionaries, his devotion to justice in every cause, his unfailing arraignment of wrong-doing, his determined pressure for social reform, his subordination of personal interest to the national welfare—all these were rejected and cast aside. And it is only fair to say that in the prevailing unsettled state of the public's mind, a clever campaign against him must have promised every chance of success.

The return of Theodore Roosevelt and the conservative wing of the Progressives of 1912 enabled the Republican party to present a solid front; business men generally in the East were against Mr. Wilson, despite the huge profits they had been making for two years; his fearless attitude toward Germany had offended a substantial element of German-American voters, while his refusal to allow the country to be drawn into the war, without a mandate from the people, had drawn down upon him the abuse of a vociferous pro-Ally group, headed by Colonel Roosevelt. Finally, his Mexican policy, always a source of trouble, had been brought to the fore again by the necessity of adopting sterner measures in the spring and early summer of 1916.

Of Mr. Wilson's renomination there was never the slightest doubt. The only man who could ever have contested the nomination with him was

PRESIDENT WILSON'S SECOND CAMPAIGN

Mr. Bryan, and Mr. Bryan, whether knowingly or unknowingly, threw away his chances by his attitude toward the Lusitania controversy with Germany. Mr. Wilson was far and away the strongest man in his party. In fact, no President in recent times had ever been leader of his party to the same degree. Democracy was solidly behind him. The question his campaign committee faced was the necessity of attracting enough Progressive and independent votes and the ballots of newly enfranchised women to offset the old Republican majority which had triumphed in 1896, in 1900, in 1904, and in 1908.

The President was especially fortunate in the choice of his National Chairman, Vance McCormick, of Pennsylvania, an old Yale football player, a choice which had the thorough approval of Colonel House. There was considerable opposition to Mr. McCormick's selection among Democratic leaders, because he came from a Republican State. But the President and Colonel House held that this was actually an advantage. It meant that he would not be handicapped by the factional fights which always laid a burden on the shoulders of any National Chairman who could control the vote of his State. Moreover, Mr. McCormick was a Progressive, who had enjoyed the support and endorsement of Colonel Roosevelt as candidate for Governor in 1912, and

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

he would therefore be an ideal man for attracting the Progressive votes, which the Democrats needed rather badly.

He had an exceedingly good personality, was an excellent organizer, and possessed the best of health, which permitted him to work night and day—no mean advantage for the chairman of a national political committee. Shortly after he was appointed he came over to New York and spent the day with Colonel House, who had never met him before. They talked and dined together, went to the theater, and talked some more, and Colonel House took his measure.

"McCormick is a splendid fellow," was his verdict. "He grows on you. The more you see of him, the better you like him. He is lovable in disposition, cheery, hard-working, friendly to everybody, with a peculiar facility for making men get along together and ironing out difficulties. He was the best man we could have picked for the place, and he more than justified the President's selection of him."

Fundamentally, the Democrats had a strong appeal to make to the voters in 1916. "Peace, Prosperity, and Preparedness!" was their slogan. In a time when all the other great nations of the world had been involved in war, Mr. Wilson had managed honorably to steer clear of hostilities, and had even succeeded in winning a diplomatic

PRESIDENT WILSON'S SECOND CAMPAIGN

victory over Germany on the Sussex issue. In Mexico the President had upheld American prestige by his occupation of Vera Cruz, by his dispatch of Pershing's column into Sonora in pursuit of Villa in March, 1916, and by his mobilization of the National Guard along the border in the following June, after Carranza troops had ambushed a patrol of Pershing's men at Carrizal. Yet despite these measures he had averted war, making it perfectly clear to the responsible authorities in Mexico that he would give them every opportunity to solve their difficulties in their own way.

But there was considerable discontent with both his German and Mexican policies. Fortunately for Mr. Wilson, Mr. Charles E. Hughes, the Republican Presidential candidate, elected to observe a cautiously non-committal attitude on these questions, aiming to avoid antagonizing the German-Americans who were assailing the President for being pro-British, or the people who followed Colonel Roosevelt's lead and denounced him for having failed to intervene in the world war, either when the Germans violated the neutrality of Belgium or when the *Lusitania* was sunk; and similarly, endeavoring to please all shades of opinion regarding Mexico.

The President was quick to seize the opportunity of taking the offensive, and it was he and

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

his supporters who held this strategic advantage throughout the balance of the campaign. He took his stand squarely on the issue of peace. He challenged the Republicans again and again: Would they, had they been in power in August, 1914, or in May, 1915, have intervened in the war in Europe? Would they, had they been in power in the summer of 1914, have marched from Vera Cruz to Mexico City, or in March, 1916, would they have used Villa's border raids as an excuse for embarking upon hostilities with Carranza and all Mexico? This was an issue Mr. Wilson could safely go to the voters upon, for he knew that the vast majority of Americans had not wanted war, either with Germany or Mexico.

He never allowed a hint to escape of the profound secret reasons which had governed his foreign policy. It must be apparent to any one who has read these pages that he could have silenced his most unreasonable critics by a brief statement of the conclusions he and Colonel House had reached so far back as the fall of 1913. But for him to have explained at that time might have hampered his influence abroad in behalf of peace, and he considered it was incumbent upon him, above all things, to preserve every resource he had to obtain peace when the right moment came. In the summer and early

PRESIDENT WILSON'S SECOND CAMPAIGN

fall of 1916 the President and Colonel House supposed that Germany intended to live up to the obligations solemnly assumed by her with regard to her conduct of sea warfare. They were confident that the United States was as safe as a nation could be in such disturbed times, and they were happy in the thought that this left them free to work for the end of the war in Europe.

In the field of domestic affairs, Mr. Wilson had nothing to apologize for. He could point to the most remarkable program of progressive, liberal legislation, enacted and in operation, which had ever been secured by one Administration in three years. The Federal Reserve act, the Rural Credits act, the Underwood Tariff law, the final achievement of an Income Tax law, a definite programme for naval and military preparedness, establishment of the Federal Trade Commission, direct election of Senators, the Industrial Employees Arbitration act, the Child Labor and Eight-Hour laws, Philippine independence, and half-a-dozen other important measures, had set a record, not to speak of the universal speeding up of the Federal departments and the higher moral tone of Government. It was a record to be proud of. Had Mr. Wilson been defeated in 1916, he would still have been remembered in history as a President who threw aside conven-

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

tion and placed monumental laws upon the statute books.

So much for the issues. The weaknesses of Mr. Wilson's candidacy were as apparent to Colonel House and the President's other advisers as was the strength of the Republicans. Never before—not even in the palmiest days of Mark Hanna's leadership—were campaign funds subscribed to as they were by the leaders of "Big Business" who backed Mr. Hughes. Colonel House realized from the opening of the campaign that it would be impossible to rival the enemy in this respect. To make any attempt to meet them on their own footing would be ridiculous, disastrous. But it is one of Colonel House's political axioms that too much money in a campaign is liable to be a greater handicap than an asset.

"Too much money is an evil," he says. "It reacts upon its spenders. The best cause can be ruined by it. Look at what happened to the Fusion municipal campaign in New York city in 1917. Too much money wrecked the chances of a good ticket. It is always best in a campaign to keep your expenses down to strictly legitimate purposes—office work, typing, paper, the telephone and telegraph, and printing. Circularizing is a feature which can easily be overdone. It never pays with city people. They throw away the literature sent to them; they have too

PRESIDENT WILSON'S SECOND CAMPAIGN

much to do, too many interests, to give the time to reading it. But in a campaign in rural districts, good printed matter frequently is valuable, as country people have fewer resources for amusement."

Colonel House's basic idea of the campaign was to try to organize 16,000,000 voters for Wilson, precisely as you would go about organizing a precinct for the election of a justice of the peace. In other words, he advised the political managers to use the lowest possible unit of organization, and to employ meticulous care in reaching every voter. Many Democratic leaders doubted that it could be done, but Colonel House insisted that if his scheme would elect a justice of the peace, it would elect a President, and in the end he convinced them. The chief difficulty was lack of money, but in this respect, they did the best they could in the circumstances. The more money the managers had in certain States or districts, why, the more units they organized. If they could not organize by precinct, they organized by assembly districts or counties.

The winning factor in Colonel House's strategy, however, was his dispersal of the Democratic funds and energy. He saw early in the campaign that the Republicans were going to make their big efforts in the densely populated States of the Northeastern section of the coun-

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

try, relying for success in the West upon the normal Republican majorities returned in the past. For example, the Republican managers simply squandered money in New York, which they regarded in 1916 as more than ever the pivotal State of the Union, with its forty-five electoral votes. The allotment of funds in New York was said to have been as high as \$5,000 an election district. In Pennsylvania, Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin, and in New England the same conditions prevailed.

Colonel House counselled the Democratic managers to go quietly out into the West and without drawing too much attention to their exertions, make every effort to win over the States which had shown radical tendencies in recent elections, especially the woman suffrage States. The Republicans mostly ignored these States. Colonel House, with his ear close to the ground, had perceived the direction in which they were drifting. In a few States where the Republicans were working hard, such as Ohio, Kansas, and California, the Democrats let themselves out to meet their opponents, with results surprisingly satisfactory. It was a daring plan. It meant that Mr. Wilson's victory could not be won by a very wide margin, and that a slip-up in a vital State would mean a defeat. As it happened, the election turned entirely on California, whose thirteen

PRESIDENT WILSON'S SECOND CAMPAIGN

electoral votes were won by little more than 3,000 majority, largely due to the rallying of the women and Progressives to Mr. Wilson.

It was one of the tensest elections in the country's history. The New York evening papers of Election Day—all but the *Evening Post*—conceded the election of Hughes, for the impressive majorities he rolled up in the East and Middle West, it was taken for granted, would be duplicated in the Prairie, Rocky Mountain, and Pacific Coast States. The New York *Sun*, the next morning, November 8, announced that Hughes had "swept the West," and already was assured of more than 291 electoral votes, a safe margin over the 266 necessary to elect. Even the New York *World*, stanch supporter of Wilson, that morning conceded Hughes's election, stating that he had carried twenty-three States, with 284 electoral votes.

A few hours later the outlook was materially changed, as the close returns of the Far West began to come over the wires in detail. There, it was seen, in State after State, which the Republican managers had confidently looked upon as safe, Wilson was running neck-and-neck with Hughes or leading him—and always the Wilson votes kept increasing while the Hughes votes decreased.

On the morning of November 10, Mr. Wilson's

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

election was assured beyond cavil by his victory in California. He received 277 electoral votes, the odd one coming from West Virginia, where there was a split, seven votes going to Hughes and one to Wilson. He received a total of 9,129,269 votes, against 8,547,328 for Hughes, or a majority of 581,941. From being a minority President he became a majority President, and even more impressively so geographically speaking. The Republican party was revealed as pent up in narrow stretches of country along the northern third of the Atlantic seaboard and in the Middle West around the Great Lakes. Ohio intervened between the two Republican blocks of States, isolating one from the other. Even in rockbound New England, New Hampshire had gone Democratic. Everywhere else, North, South, and West, Wilson had won. Only Oregon on the Pacific Coast and South Dakota in the Prairie group had remained Republican. It was impressive—or depressing—as you happen to look at it.

Through all the hurly-burly of the days immediately preceding election and following it, Colonel House preserved his calm and his curiously detached vision. He refused to grow excited; he refused to despair; he refused to worry. The morning after Election Day, when the President's prospects still seemed black, he

PRESIDENT WILSON'S SECOND CAMPAIGN

was cheerful and confident. He had made his calculations, and he believed in them, until they were definitely proved wrong. All night he had rested with a telephone at his bedside, answering calls from all over the country, soothing distracted State chairmen, advising on the issuing of statements. But he did not show it, except for the lines of fatigue in his face. His eyes were clear, his manner unhurried.

"Wait until we hear more from the West," he advised. "Even here in the East, the first big majorities for Hughes are falling."

His confidence was justified. The West went Democratic, and Mr. Wilson won by the same tactics which elect a justice of the peace.

"It was a great personal triumph for the President," said Colonel House long afterward. "But it was more than that. It was a political revolution, a realignment of national sentiment. It was the most encouraging sign in American politics."

CHAPTER XX

LAST EFFORTS FOR PEACE

IN October, 1916, a few weeks before Election Day, Ambassador Gerard returned from Germany for a brief visit, and the confidential report he brought with him was not reassuring. The restrictions on submarine warfare, imposed by Germany's acceptance of Mr. Wilson's ultimatum after the Sussex affair, were growing irksome to the naval and military chiefs, and they were pressing the civil Government—notably Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg and Foreign Minister von Jagow—to repudiate the undertaking. Hindenburg, now supreme commander of the German armies, had come to Berlin in sympathy with the Chancellor's policy of moderation at sea and conciliation of the United States, but gradually, he was won away from the Chancellor's side and finally became a partisan of von Tirpitz and the other advocates of ruthlessness.

The achievements of the German high command in the "pincers" campaign of von Falkenhayn and von Mackensen against Rumania, in the fall of 1916, which transferred the Entente's

LAST EFFORTS FOR PEACE

newest ally from the credit to the debit column, enhanced the prestige of those commanders to such a degree that when they gave their support to von Tirpitz and his friends the Chancellor and von Jagow were unable to resist them. The Chancellor abandoned his convictions and his pledged word for the sake of remaining in office and retaining the shadow of power the military clique had left to the head of the civil government. But von Jagow, to his honor be it said, refused to countenance an action, the wisdom of which and the honesty alike he decried, and he resigned his portfolio on November 22. He is one of the few German officials in the present war who have seemed to possess the courage of their convictions and the will to resist the domination of the military party. As a result, he has passed out of official life, and he is occupied to-day—or was, at last accounts—in inconspicuous work for the Red Cross.

Of course, all these occurrences were not known to the Administration in Washington at the time, but enough information reached the President to make them uneasy. It was plain that the war was approaching a crisis, and that unless peace could be obtained within the next few weeks, the struggle must enter upon a phase more desperate than any in the preceding two years—with consequences highly dangerous to

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

the United States. Both the President and Colonel House were convinced that the ultimate effect of a resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare by Germany would be the inclusion of the United States in the struggle. It would be impossible for a great nation to support the arrogation of supreme authority over life and death and property rights on the high seas to which the German Admiralty pretended.

It was true that violations of international law had been committed by the Entente Allies at various times and places in the course of the war; but these infractions were as minor civil offences in comparison with Germany's outrages against the criminal law of mankind. And in every case, the Entente Allies had been prompt to show reason and a sense of obligation when their transgressions were brought to their attention. There could be no question on whose side we should enter the war, if we did enter it. But the last wish of Mr. Wilson was to enter it at all. He had just been reëlected on the score of his efforts to keep the Republic at peace, and if it was possible to continue at peace, on terms compatible with the national honor, he was determined to do so.

The obvious policy for him to adopt in the circumstances was to call for a statement of possible terms of peace by all the belligerents; but he waited as long as he deemed it safe before

LAST EFFORTS FOR PEACE

doing so, largely because, in the meantime, our diplomatic representatives in Berlin had received renewed assurances of Germany's intention to live up to her promise of conducting submarine operations according to the rules of cruiser warfare. In the meantime, too, on the very eve of the President's promulgation of his peace appeal to the world, the Teutonic Allies, themselves, launched through the medium of the neutral Governments of the United States, Spain, and Switzerland, a suggestion to the Entente Allies for a conference of belligerents to discuss terms of peace. Germany had been moved to this step by her successes in Rumania, which, in two months, had changed her military position from one of grave danger to that of a substantial victor in the year's fighting, precisely as her campaign in Servia in the preceding fall had remedied the effects of her failures in France and Belgium and the setbacks of Austria at the hands of the Russians.

Germany's move for peace was, in a way, a last effort on the part of her civil government to avert the resumption of ruthlessness at sea; but this fact was not known outside of the inner circles in Berlin. It did not, however, indicate a real desire for peace on equitable terms, as the event showed. Germany still considered herself the victor, and she was disposed to insist upon her

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

right to dictate the final settlement. Never, perhaps, was the overmastering power of the military clique revealed more clearly than in the sequence of events which turned to account the situation at the close of 1916, to press for a "German peace," or a carnival of savagery such as the world had not known since the Thirty Years War. Mr. Wilson and his advisers naturally took the German bid for peace at its face value, as an indication of willingness frankly to state fair and practicable terms from which the basis for a conclusive settlement could be worked out.

"We hoped for peace until it became apparent that the military party in Germany wanted only such a peace as was unsatisfactory, not only to the Entente nations, but to the majority of neutrals," Colonel House puts it. "The President was scrupulous to do nothing which could be interpreted by either side as indicating an intention to abandon neutrality.

"Within the limits of this policy, however, the Administration prepared plans for substantial increases in the Army and Navy, and these plans were explained and advocated by the President in a series of speeches delivered on a special 'preparedness' tour. He did not wish to arouse suspicions of our intentions among any of the belligerents. It was particularly important that

LAST EFFORTS FOR PEACE

Germany should be convinced of our disinterestedness. He was determined to give Germany every chance, and not to allow her any excuse for suspecting our motives. His patience was almost unbelievable."

The final moves in the game which were to end in the alignment of the United States with the nations against Germany—the moves which may be said to have signed the death-warrant of the German military clique—were rapid and easy to trace. On December 12, the Teutonic Allies addressed the note, previously alluded to, to the members of the Entente, suggesting a conference of representatives of all belligerents on neutral soil. No terms were stated. On December 19, David Lloyd George, who had just succeeded Herbert Asquith as Premier of Great Britain, in the House of Commons declared that any peace terms must include complete restitution, full reparation and guarantees for the future from Germany and her Allies.

On December 20, there was published the text of a note Mr. Wilson had caused to be dispatched to all the warring nations, calling upon them to state their terms. This note, which was written several days before Lloyd George's speech and had been formulated prior even to the publication of Germany's note mentioned above, was signed by Mr. Lansing, the Secretary of State,

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

and asserted that "the President is not proposing peace; he is not even offering mediation. He is merely proposing that soundings be taken, in order that we may learn, the neutral nations with the belligerent, how near the haven of peace may be for which all mankind longs with an intense and increasing longing."

This note was sent by the President in order that, when the time of wrath came, there might be no question of the United States having used every means at its disposal to prevent war. Patiently, with infinite kindness and humility, the President extended again and again the means by which Germany might lift herself up out of the mire of slaughter in which she was sunken. His enemies denounced his meekness, dubbed it cowardice, but upon his conduct depended the lives of hundreds of thousands, perhaps of millions, of his countrymen.

"On his shoulders rested—and it still rests—the world's hope of peace," said Colonel House in narrating this episode of history. "It was a responsibility the weight of which the ordinary mind cannot grasp. It was crushing, depressing. But he carried it without whimpering, and his resolution to do what was right has been recognized by many of those who once criticised him for inaction. The country was not ready for war, and did not want war. The President was

LAST EFFORTS FOR PEACE

determined to obey the will of the people, and to any fair-minded man it was manifest that the American people did not want war, if it could be prevented. Mr. Wilson handled affairs so skillfully that when the break with Germany did come the realization of German dishonesty was like a slap in the face to Americans. The country was solid for war behind Mr. Wilson because the facts, comprehensible to the simplest mind, showed that the President had done everything humanly possible to keep peace."

On December 26, Germany replied in courteous but hollow terms to the President's note, reiterating the suggestion contained in the note of the Teutonic Allies for a conference of belligerents, but ignoring the request for terms. On December 30, the Entente Allies replied to the German note of December 12, denouncing it as "not an offer of peace, but a war maneuver" and echoing Lloyd George's demand for assurances of reparation for wrongs committed and guarantees against repetition of like offences in the future, as a preliminary to peace.

The New Year dawned with peace trembling in the balance, with the probabilities strongly against it. Some time in December, at a secret council held in Berlin, the military and naval authorities had enforced upon the German Government their plan for a resumption of unchecked

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

submarine warfare in February, providing Germany's enemies did not previously agree to a peace satisfactory to the military clique—that is, a peace which would enable the military clique to pose before the German people as their saviours and the victors in the war. Rumors of this determination were circulated in Germany and reached neutral and enemy countries, but all inquiries by our Embassy in Berlin were answered by assurances that no such intention was held. Let it be stated emphatically, in this connection, that the German replies to our inquiries were not evasions; they were plain lies. When Mr. Gerard afterward taxed Dr. Zimmermann, the new Foreign Minister, with those lies, Zimmermann, wholly unabashed, replied that it had been deemed best not to reveal the truth “in order to avoid controversy and preserve good relations between the two countries.”

On January 10, 1917, the Entente Allies replied to the President's note of December 20, giving their terms as restoration by Germany and her accomplices of all territories overrun not only in this present war, but in the past, with indemnities for damages and outrages, and the expulsion of the Ottoman Turks from Europe. It was apparent now to the President and to Colonel House that the gap between the belligerents was as wide as ever, and that only an heroic attempt, ignoring

LAST EFFORTS FOR PEACE

diplomatic precedent and tradition, could stop the war and insure peace for the United States. Mr. Wilson did not dodge the issue. He appeared before the Senate on January 22, and read his famous address in which he pleaded for the sake of a suffering world, for a democratic peace, and for a fair readjustment of international relations which should have for its cardinal principles the establishment of true freedom of the seas, limitation of armaments, and the adoption of a worldwide Monroe Doctrine, providing for abstention by every nation from interference in the affairs of other nations. As the future arbiter of the world and the controlling factor in the reestablished fabric of civilization, Mr. Wilson envisioned a League of Peace, a federation of nations, working for all.

Knowing, as we now know, the state of mind existing then among the rulers of Germany, the result of the President's last effort was a foregone conclusion. A peace such as he sketched would have meant failure for the military clique and the disillusionment of the German people. "Peace without victory" was farthest from their intentions. Already they had gauged the determination of the Entente to continue the war, and to counteract the possible opposition of the United States, Zimmermann on January 19, had initiated his preposterous attempt to form an al-

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

liance against the United States with Mexico and Japan, while the plans for the resumption of submarine raids were rapidly approaching completion.

It is interesting to speculate on the degree to which Count von Bernstorff, the German Ambassador at Washington, was acquainted with the secret policies of the Government in Berlin. Outwardly, at least, Bernstorff was always the friend of the United States, always a worker for international peace. After the President's note of December 20 was made public he declared: "Now we shall have a conference." It is beyond question that he applied pressure to good purpose in Berlin to avert the crises caused by the Lusitania, Arabic, and Sussex incidents. But it seems impossible that in January, 1917, he could have been ignorant of the plans for action which Zimmermann had made in conjunction with the Admiralty and the Great General Staff. And surely, he must have had cognizance of Zimmermann's atrocious intrigues in Mexico and the proposition, absurd though it was, to form an alliance against a nation with which Germany was at peace. Unjudged though he must be, until he has had an opportunity to speak for himself, without restraint, Count von Bernstorff has many questions to answer before he can win back the trust of Americans. A typical German aristo-

LAST EFFORTS FOR PEACE

crat, cynical in his entire outlook upon life, an atheist, a self-confessed believer in nothing, who lives for the present and without any but purely selfish ties, he is a character foreign in environment and culture to American views and correspondingly difficult to analyze.

The situation with which the United States was confronted by the failure of the President's peace policy was realized abroad before it penetrated the minds of people at home. On January 24, the Associated Press correspondent in London was reporting that "parliamentary circles considered Wilson's Senate speech a last move for peace and if it failed that he would be obliged to side finally with one of the belligerent groups." Mr. Wilson, himself, and his advisers understood this, and every precautionary step was taken that was permitted by the President's insistence upon observance of strict neutrality, to make ready for a break with Germany, if it came.

The first consideration in the minds of the Administration was to withdraw Pershing's column from Mexico. Luckily, the purpose for which Pershing had been sent into Mexico, the breaking up of Villa's power to raid American towns on the border, had been accomplished, and the preparations for withdrawal had been begun in December. The National Guard troops mobilized on the Border in June, 1916, likewise had been

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

sent home before this time, the country being the gainer by the training and experience acquired by officers and men in the course of their service in the field.

In the afternoon of January 30, Colonel House received a telephone call from Washington, announcing the receipt of an answer from Germany to the President's note urging a league of peace, and with it a note on submarine warfare. Colonel House asked how matters looked, and was told that the submarine note was "rather bad." In that note, without any previous warning, Germany announced to the United States that she was going to begin immediately, on February 1, unrestricted submarine warfare in the zone around the British Isles, and undertook to specify the route which a restricted number of American ships might take through this zone.

The next day Colonel House was summoned to Washington to consult with the President. It was plain to both of them that the break they had worked so hard to prevent was now inevitable. Yet still the President intended to do everything he could to stop short of war. On February 4, he addressed Congress, announcing the severance of diplomatic relations with Germany, and stating his hope that Germany would pause before it was too late. On February 5, the rear-guard of Pershing's column marched back across

LAST EFFORTS FOR PEACE

the border. On February 26, the steamship *Laconia*, with Americans on board, was sunk, and on the next day the President addressed Congress, suggesting the proclamation of armed neutrality, as a final effort to apply pressure to the German Government to show that the United States was in earnest and would protect its rights against lawless attacks at sea. But all preliminary measures failed, and on April 6, 1917, in response to an address delivered by the President on April 2, the Congress of the United States declared solemnly that a state of war existed between the people of the United States and the Imperial Government of Germany.

The President did everything it was humanly possible to do to prevent the definite break. He was willing to negotiate up to the last minute, had Germany shown any disposition to be reasonable. He left no stone unturned. At the very moment when he was awaiting Germany's answer to his second peace note, he had talked the Entente Allies into agreeing to accept reasonable terms. The world was never so near peace as it was in the last week of January, 1917.

Germany knew this, too. The rulers at Berlin were aware that the United States was able to bring pressure to bear upon the Entente Governments to accept a just peace. But Germany would not then, nor would she at any other time,

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

offer or agree to accept terms which would be satisfactory to the United States, much less her opponents. Instead of taking the hand of peace Mr. Wilson held out to her, she drew the sword. The German military party did not want peace. They took care that there should not be peace.

CHAPTER XXI

HIS SHARE IN THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR

COLONEL HOUSE'S share in the general conduct of the war since the United States joined the Entente Allies has been more important than most people might suppose. His knowledge of conditions abroad and his acquaintance with the psychology and characters of the leading statesmen of Britain, France, and Germany are of inestimable advantage to the President, but equally so is his talent for smoothing over difficulties and taking the kinks out of Government work. Colonel House has a positive genius for persuading men of opposite temperaments to work in harmony, and he can always be depended upon to evolve some formula for solving the most difficult problem. That is why, although he is pre-occupied mainly with the Administration's international negotiations, he is frequently called upon to advise in regard to troubles or plans in Washington.

Indeed, in war matters, as in political or legislative matters, Colonel House plays the part of buffer for the President. He aims to take off Mr.

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

Wilson's shoulders as much as possible of the burden of interviews and details. By meeting and talking to the bulk of people who crave the President's attention, he is able to sift from the chaff the small quantity of really worthwhile ideas; and in the same way, he reads and assimilates masses of data and reports, passing on to Mr. Wilson the facts which are essential. The result is a considerable saving of time for the harassed President, with proportionate increase in the efficiency which Mr. Wilson is able to bring to bear upon the major problems for which he can conserve himself.

Familiar as he was with the experiences of the German, British, and French Governments in the war, Colonel House was able to take a candid and unprejudiced view of all the nostrums, cure-alls, win-the-war-quick remedies and "can-the-Kaiser" schemes which were brought forward by scores of well-meaning persons and organizations. From the very start he knew that there were just two ways in which the war could be won: by out-matching Germany's astonishing achievements in coördination of national effort and by attacking Germany and Austria from within. He thoroughly agreed with Mr. Wilson that American political institutions would not lend themselves to such departures from national custom as the erection of a coalition Cabinet. He knew, far better

HIS SHARE IN THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR

than did the advocates of this idea, the precise degree to which it had accelerated war work abroad; but he was also aware of the constitutional and political—not to speak of the human—obstacles in the way of its successful operation in Washington. He held, with the President, that the extraordinary amount of responsibility entrusted, under the Constitution, to the President made it incumbent upon the Chief Executive to have the support of men of his own party.

From all historic precedent, the United States looks to one man to lead the country's forces in the war. That man is Woodrow Wilson. To him will go the credit for victory or the obloquy of defeat. Moreover, it was the feeling of the President and his adviser that the exigencies of the international situation left no time for the trial of new ideas. The creation of a coalition Cabinet might, conceivably, meet with a certain measure of success. On the other hand, there were many reasons for supposing that it might encounter disaster. Consider the result, had a coalition Cabinet sat during the debates upon army supply matters, coal, transportation, and shipbuilding, during the past winter. It is difficult to believe that the divisions and bickerings in Congress would not have been reflected at the Cabinet meetings. In that case, what would have become of coördination—that much-vaunted

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

word which has come to plague us, to spur us on to new flights of effort? The wheels of government must have been blocked, the intricate machinery of combat dislocated beyond repair.

No; a coalition Cabinet was rejected by Colonel House's evenly balanced mind. The idea had advantages, but they were advantages which spring from playing to the galleries. The announcement of such a step would be hailed by all sections of the country as a mark of disinterestedness, a proof of non-partisanship. But what would such tributes avail if the war-engine was slowed up? For better or for worse, the voters of the United States had elected a Democratic President, after four years of trial of him and his Cabinet. It was for this same President and this same Cabinet to steer the country through the mazes of war. They were used to working together; they were familiar with their staffs and the routine of their departments. Also, the President had certain aims and ideals which he could not entrust to any but lieutenants of his own way of thinking. Successful administration depends to a great degree upon complete unity in policy—which requires unity in thought. The President was convinced that in a situation so fraught with delicate questions and with the great objects he had set himself to attain, it was more than ever

HIS SHARE IN THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR

necessary for him to have the support of men who saw with him eye to eye.

The President's position was aptly set forth by Colonel House in a conversation on this point. He said:

"Mr. Wilson is firm in his determination to win this war. He has three years to do it in. All the Premiers of the other Allied nations do not know at what moment they may lose their power. But the President has three years that he is sure of, and he is going to do it—to win the war. He will use all his authority to attain that end. If a War Council bill is passed, he can veto it, and if it is passed over his veto he can appoint men whom he knows he can trust, who will share his views. The main fact is that he has the power and the will to win the war. He may be hampered; he may be badgered and annoyed. But if he has any sort of support from the people, he will carry out their wishes to a successful conclusion. He will win the war."

It may be said with absolute authority that there has been no other thought in the President's head since April 2, 1917. Elected as a peace President, on a platform of peace and largely for his efforts in having kept the country at peace, Mr. Wilson, when pressed too far by the arrogance of German autocracy, became as fierce a militant as the Kaiser himself, but a militant in

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

the cause of justice, of the oppressed and the weak of the earth. He will not be deterred or put aside. He will not falter in his intentions. He will not suffer the effects of militarism to halt or overthrow the splendid development of liberalism which has attended his Administration. He is going to prove to the world that it is possible for a great free people, for a great free democracy, to gird up its loins and fight with the professional warriors of Imperialism, and then, after the re-establishment of right, return to the factory and the plow, the courtroom and the workshop. He hopes to see the republic emerge from the struggle vitalized and chastened by suffering and service.

One of Colonel House's cardinal principles for doing anything successfully is to work hard and say nothing. He believes that is the way to win the war, and that the hardest thing for democracies to learn is the harm done by too much talking.

"If Woodrow Wilson wanted to come to New York and make a speech, saying 'To hell with the Kaiser!' he could make a tremendous effect and stir the enthusiasm of the country," Colonel House puts it. "But he wants to win the war—so he doesn't. As it happens, that isn't the way wars are won.

"Personally, I don't believe in talking. That

HIS SHARE IN THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR

is the trouble with democracies. They always show a tendency toward government by mouth. When I was in politics in Texas, I made it a rule never to have a meeting of the full Committee, for if they had all met they would have done nothing but talk till the end of the campaign. Instead, I would select a few representative men—a Jew, let us say, and somebody from the Baptists, a Methodist, perhaps, and some one representing the large foreign population we have in Texas—and have them thrash things out.

"The more I see of life, the more I am impressed that the great handicap on so many statesmen is their love of talking for effect. They like to say something that will attract the attention of the crowd, and then sit idle for a week and read over their speech complacently. When I can, I do away with that sort of thing. It means lost motion, wasted effort, and frequently foolish statements which are hard to live down."

Although it is not generally known, Colonel House was one of the earliest supporters of the strategic theory of attacking the Central Powers from within with propaganda designed to stir the masses to rebellion and to drive wedges between Germany and Austria. Long before the United States entered the war, he advocated this policy in informal talks with the statesmen of the Entente countries, but they declined to see the possi-

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

bilities in it. A few spasmodic attempts were made, but for the most part the Allied Governments persisted in believing that there was no difference between the German Government and the German people. They insisted all through the first two years of the war in talking about annihilating Germany, rearing an economic barrier to stifle German trade, and partitioning Austria. Of course, this was playing directly into the hands of the German military clique, who, whenever the national spirit flagged, could point to the outgiving of some enemy statesman and say:

"There, you fools! Look at that. You may not like us, but if you don't play up for us, that is what you will get."

It was not until President Wilson began to influence the management of the diplomacy of the Entente Allies in the summer of 1917 that any real effort was made to undermine the morale of the German people by intellectual means. The results of Mr. Wilson's policy of fighting behind the enemy's lines are already becoming apparent, but the full effects of his attacks with the pen are not yet realized, even in the Teutonic countries. Such methods are slow in development, but insidious in the ever-widening sphere of their influence and defying limitation of their taint.

"I could never see any reason why the Entente Allies should not make use of this weapon of

HIS SHARE IN THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR

propaganda behind the German lines," commented Colonel House. "The Germans have used precisely the same means to sap the fighting stamina of Russia and Italy and to try to gain like results in France. If they can do it, then we can do it. But our allies could not see the advantage of this idea until Mr. Wilson gave a demonstration of it. It stands to reason that the German Government must be vulnerable, like every other Government, although perhaps not in so great a degree. But if we keep hammering away at the weak links, sooner or later they are going to give, and the side which breaks up from within is the side which will lose the war."

Looking back over the history of the war, it is hard to understand how the Germans survived their frequent blunders. German statesmen have admitted to Swiss diplomats that the violation of Belgian neutrality at the insistence of the military clique was the worst thing they could have done and may very well have cost them the war. The policy of frightfulness inaugurated by the military chiefs to cow the inhabitants of the occupied territory in Belgium and northern France likewise was deplored by the cooler heads at Berlin as calculated to react against Germany outside of Europe, while many influential Germans condemned energetically the submarine warfare advocated by von Tirpitz, foreseeing the

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

estrangement of the United States and the rest of civilization, together with Germany's best markets in North and South America and the East.

In a strictly military sense, the failure of the German high command in France in the summer and fall of 1914 was paralyzing to German pride at the time. For a few months, the German morale tottered, and had it been attacked in the right spirit from outside must have fallen, with disastrous consequences to the Central Powers. But gradually Germany recovered, regained her spirits, and became endowed with the super-human strength of desperation—all this more than anything else through the series of errors and misfortunes which befell the Entente nations, some of them preventable, some of them apparently beyond the reach of human limitation.

CHAPTER XXII

AT THE HEAD OF THE AMERICAN WAR MISSION

DURING the summer of 1917 conditions abroad developed the need of closer co-operation between the Allies, and in September it was suggested that Colonel House should make a fourth trip to Europe. The questions which the Allied governments desired to confer with him upon included all the various elements essential to success against the Central Powers—food and fuel distribution, munitions, shipping, manpower, and military and naval strategy. They were highly technical, and Colonel House foresaw that if he attempted to deal with them in detail he would be swamped and in the long run nothing would be accomplished. So he proposed as an alternative plan that a regular commission of experts in the several fields should be constituted, with himself at the head of it, to attend the projected Inter-Allied War Conference at Paris. This was the genesis of the American War Mission, the first American Mission which ever sat in European councils. It was, in its way, a step in the development of our foreign policy.

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

no less momentous than the declaration of war against Germany.

The Inter-Allied War Conference was designed primarily as a means to bring about greater unity of effort among the Allies. The pressing need for it was pointed with dramatic force by the Italian collapse in the last week of October. Germany could formulate policies and direct the war on all fronts from a single room in Berlin. But hitherto the Entente Allies had scrambled along as best they could, each one more or less for himself, with only the most primitive machinery for interchanging resources and bracing the weak spots when they appeared. The closing events of 1917, no less than the Allied disasters in the past, were cogent arguments in favor of a closer linking of Allied endeavors.

The President's choice of Colonel House to head the American Mission to the Conference was received with some indignation by the professional Republicans. Of course, the bare fact that Colonel House knew the European statesmen, whom he would have to meet, better than any other American citizen, carried no weight at all with those who objected to him. He was a rank outsider. He did not even boast a diplomatic title. He had never worn the toga of a Senator or possessed the privileges of the House of Representatives. They boiled with rage.

AT HEAD OF THE AMERICAN WAR MISSION

Here was a man, a mere private citizen, mind you, being sent to confer with the Premiers of the great European nations. It was an insult to our Allies. Never mind if the British and French Governments would rather have House head the Mission, anyway. They were simply trying to be courteous under great provocation. It was intolerable that this unknown man from Texas, this unlettered ranchman, this mysterious Colonel, should receive preference over the nation's elect. And to say truth, there were quite a few professional Democrats who agreed heartily, if in private, with their professional brethren of the opposing faith.

In the choice of the other members of the American Mission the professional objectors found other causes for complaint. Admiral W. S. Benson, Chief of Naval Operations, as naval adviser, and Gen. Tasker H. Bliss, Chief of Staff of the army, as military adviser, could not be criticised. But the objections of mediocrity or obscurity were raised against Oscar T. Crosby, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury; Vance C. McCormick, chairman of the War Trade Board; Bainbridge Colby, of the United States Shipping Board; Dr. Alonzo Taylor, representing the Food Controller; Thomas Nelson Perkins, representing the Priority Board, Paul D. Cravath, and Gordon Auchincloss, as secretary of the Mission.

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

Mr. Auchincloss, as it happens, is Colonel House's son-in-law. He is also one of the best-known of the younger members of the New York bar and an expert in international law. His services cost the Government nothing.

It was even alleged that the Democrats had gobbled the entire personnel of the Mission, and that there was not a single Republican member. It is true that in selecting his assistants Colonel House had given no thought to their political creeds, but when this talk reached his ears, after their arrival in London, he made a quiet canvass, which disclosed that of the nine ranking members, including himself, four were Democrats, four were Republicans, and one a Progressive, a very fair distribution, although unpremeditated. The fact is that the members of the American Mission were chosen with great care, not for their political repute or experience, but for their ability in the several lines of policy which were to be settled. The results of the Mission—perhaps the most successful of its kind which the United States has ever sent abroad—amply vindicated his judgment.

The Mission left the United States on October 27 and arrived in London on November 6, and promptly began a series of conferences and consultations with members of the British Government. Colonel House had mapped out his pro-

AT HEAD OF THE AMERICAN WAR MISSION

gram of work so as to insure the maximum amount of all-round efficiency. In the first place, he barred talking altogether. The Mission was there to work, not to orate. In the second place, he urged the members not to go out to entertainments. He, himself, set the example, by rigidly avoiding all public entertainments and confining himself to a few private luncheons and dinners with King George, Premier Lloyd George, and other leaders, at which, as a rule, as much business was worked through as in a committee meeting. In the third place, he arranged that the different experts of the Mission should deal direct with their opposites of the British Government, and that in every case only the men immediately interested in a problem should handle it. This was to prevent useless debating.

"Ten or twelve men around a table take so much longer to decide a question than three or four," says Colonel House. "If you can, always reduce your work to sub-committees. The smaller the number of men handling a proposition, the more direct are the results obtained."

The quiet, modest efficiency with which the Mission tackled the jobs awaiting it in London made a genuine impression upon British sentiment and spoke louder for American earnestness and determination than could whole pages of speeches. Of the effect produced by Colonel

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

House's tactics, a dispatch to the New York *Times* remarked:

"Never in history has any foreigner come to Europe and found greater acceptance or wielded more power. Behind this super-Ambassador, whose authority and activities are unique, stands the President, now rated in Europe as the world's greatest living statesman, and behind the President stands the country, whose measureless resources and unshakable will are counted a sure shield against the successful sweep of Prussianism."

The original date set for the convening of the Inter-Allied War Conference was November 16, but it was necessary to postpone it twice. When the American Mission reached London, Premier Lloyd George was absent in Italy, whither he had gone with Premier Painlevé of France and the French and British military chiefs to do what he could to repair the shattered Italian armies. It will be remembered that it was in the course of this visit of the British and French Premiers to Italy that at a conference held at Rapallo an agreement was entered into by the British, French, and Italian Governments for the setting up of a Supreme War Council, which would sit at Versailles and exercise a general supervision over the conduct of the war on all fronts.

This measure was hailed with enthusiasm in



ENTRANCE TO DEVONSHIRE HOUSE, LONDON

Placed at the disposal of Colonel House by the British Government on the occasion of his visit to London in November 1917, at the head of the American War Mission



AT HEAD OF THE AMERICAN WAR MISSION

France, where the evils of divided command had been felt for some time, and it was equally acceptable to the Administration in Washington. Both the French Government and our own had come to the conclusion that unity of command was as necessary as unity of effort and distribution of resources. In other words, the time had come when the Entente Allies must reconcile themselves to pooling armies, more or less, as they were undertaking to pool ships, coal, and food. But the idea aroused intense and bitter opposition in many quarters in England. It became apparent that Premier Lloyd George might find it difficult to remain in office if he countenanced England's participation in such a plan, with its implied subordination of British armies to alien commanders.

On November 18, Colonel House let it be known in London that he had received a cablegram from the President, stating emphatically that the United States Government considered unity of plan and control between the Allies and the United States to be essential in order to achieve a just and permanent peace. On the same day it was announced that the President had asked Colonel House to attend the first meeting of the Supreme War Council, with General Bliss as his military adviser. On the next day, when the onslaught was made upon Lloyd George by

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

his opponents in the House of Commons, the British Premier was able to satisfy all objections by pointing to the favorable opinion of the United States regarding the new plan of unified military control.

But there came very near being a Cabinet crisis in London notwithstanding the President's cable. Through an oversight the statement disclosing the receipt of the cable was not given to one news agency in London, and this agency, for reasons which suited itself, in the afternoon of November 19 issued a dispatch from Washington which asserted that the President had denied sending any such cable to Colonel House. This dispatch only appeared in two London evening papers, but that was enough to let loose the enemies of the Supreme War Council plan.

As it happened, Colonel House had intended the next day, November 20, to attend the formal conference of the American Mission with the members of the British War Cabinet in the Cabinet Room at No. 10 Downing Street, the historic official residence of the British Prime Minister. But the uproar created by the false dispatch from Washington occupied all his time that day, and instead of attending the conference he was obliged to interview and reassure an endless string of newspaper proprietors, ministers, members of Parliament and anxious friends. To all

AT HEAD OF THE AMERICAN WAR MISSION

he gave the same counsel: wait twenty-four hours until we can hear from Washington. He knew very well that the faked report would be denied, but he admits that he has passed few more strenuous intervals of twenty-four hours.

The true reason for his absence from the conference in Downing Street was not known at the time, and in order to account for it a humorous story was circulated that he had stayed away because he dreaded having to play up as oratorical opposite of Lloyd George, a spell-binder of the dynamic Roosevelt type. As it happens, this is not true. Colonel House is accustomed to speaking at small gatherings of men, when straight-from-the-shoulder words are required. He does it all the time, did it again and again during his last trip abroad. He was quite prepared to speak in Downing Street, but it is to be doubted if he would have orated.

Oratory, as distinct from plain speaking, is a luxury which the Colonel has always denied himself. He doesn't like it. More, he is convinced past argument that he is a failure at it. It is repugnant to the innate distaste for attracting public notice which is one of the foundation stones of his character. He has been known to "orate" only once, and that was two weeks later, when the Inter-Allied Conference broke up in Paris, and Premier Clemenceau requested him as a spe-

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

cial favor to make a little speech to the delegates, alleging the good effects it would have upon France, worn and battered by her tragic three years' journey on the Via Dolorosa.

"I couldn't help it," Colonel House said almost plaintively afterward. "There wasn't any way to get out of it."

Of course, as long as he had to do it, he did it well. And inasmuch as it is the only real speech he ever made, it is justifiable to quote it here, especially as it is as direct and to the point as a sword-thrust. People who heard it reported that it was received with enthusiasm, but the people to whom it meant most, after all, were the millions who read it in the newspapers and who were impressed by a few words from this silent man as they would not have been by reams of verbiage from another. All that he said was this:

"M. Clemenceau, the President of the French Council, in welcoming the delegates to this conference, declared that we had met to work. His words were prophetic. There has been coördination and unity of purpose which promised great results for the future. It is my deep conviction that by unity and by concentrated effort we shall be able to arrive at the goal which we have set out to reach.

"In behalf of my colleagues, I want to avail myself of this occasion to thank the officials of

AT HEAD OF THE AMERICAN WAR MISSION

the French Government and through them the French people for the warm welcome and great consideration they have shown us. In coming to France we have felt that we have come to the house of our friends. Ever since our Government was founded there has been a bond of interest and sympathy between us—a sympathy which this war has fanned into a passionate admiration.

“The history of France is a history of courage and sacrifice. Therefore the great deeds which have illuminated the last three years have come as no surprise to us of America. We knew that when called upon, France would rise to splendid achievement and would add new luster to her name.

“America salutes France and her heroic sons, and feels honored to fight by the side of so gallant a comrade.”

Probably the greatest diplomatic success of Colonel House's career up to that time was the conduct of the Inter-Allied War Conference at Paris. As originally forecast it was a somewhat clumsy gathering of delegates of all the Allied nations, a dozen or fifteen of them, comprising 150 individuals. It was necessary to devise a method of procedure which would permit the accomplishment of the greatest possible amount of work in the limited time available. In a

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

gathering of this character, Colonel House knew from experience that there was a constant temptation to talk. In fact, many of the delegates had come primed with elaborate speeches setting forth what their countries had achieved in the war. Quietly and without any ostentation, Colonel House set out to thwart the orators and clear the decks of the Conference for a business-like schedule of work.

The Conference finally met in Paris on November 29, having been postponed a second time by the downfall of the Painlevé Ministry and the interval required to form and organize the new Cabinet of M. Clemenceau. By a strange coincidence, the last editorial which Clemenceau wrote for his newspaper, *L'Homme Libre*, before taking office, was an appreciative discussion of a statement issued by House upon his arrival in England, in which House had made the point that his mission had come to work, not to talk. Upon his arrival in Paris, Colonel House mentioned this to M. Clemenceau, and was delighted to find that the French Premier was still in complete agreement with him on this theory.

He suggested to M. Clemenceau the same methods which he had practiced so successfully in London—the same methods which he had used in Texas politics. Oratory was arbitrarily ruled out. There were an opening speech by M. Clemenceau and two closing speeches, one by M.

AT HEAD OF THE AMERICAN WAR MISSION

Clemenceau and one by Colonel House, himself—perhaps that was the way the disappointed orators got back at the Colonel. Otherwise, the delegates worked. They were divided up into committees and sub-committees, dealing each with a specific subject or some phase of a specific subject. In the words of Lord Northcliffe, who was one of the British delegates:

“Colonel House had reduced the vast assemblage of Allied nations to a series of small business committees, and thus hot air was entirely eliminated at the start. I cannot reveal the conference secrets, but when I looked at the gilded chamber where it first met, and realized that every man was loaded with a speech, my heart went out in gratitude to the wise Colonel, who had dammed the flood. As it was, Premier Clemenceau, in his opening address, took less than two minutes, and soon our meeting broke up and everybody settled to work.”

As a matter of fact, the first meeting of the Conference lasted about half an hour, just long enough to map out the program of the committees.

After attending the first meeting of the Supreme War Council at Versailles with General Bliss, and helping to pave the way for the later evolution by which centralized staff command of

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

the Allied armies and the formation of an inter-Allied reserve army or mass of maneuver, to use the French technical phrase, were brought about, Colonel House visited the American army in France and spent several days with General Pershing. He was back in New York on December 15, some six weeks after his departure, with a tremendous achievement to his credit and a clear-cut outline of the needs of the situation for the President.

At home, the results of the Mission's labors were the speeding up of essential war work, the centralization of effort in those fields demanding priority, and a concrete realization of the outstanding requirements of our Allies:

- (1) Food.
- (2) Shipping.
- (3) American troops as fast as they could be trained and equipped.

Abroad, the result of the Mission's visit was to hearten the peoples of the Allied nations, to convince the Allied Governments of our purpose and to establish definitely the most efficient means of waging the war. It marked an end to the era of fighting in the dark. Henceforth the Allied effort was to be directed intelligently and with full knowledge of the circumstances attending every move and policy, the might and resources

AT HEAD OF THE AMERICAN WAR MISSION

of the several nations being swung as one gigantic club against the enemy.

The cost of this Mission to the United States Government was \$12,000.

CHAPTER XXIII

PREPARING FOR THE PEACE CONFERENCE

IN September, 1917, the President appointed Colonel House to organize the laborious task of gathering and tabulating the mass of data which will be required by the American delegates to the Peace Conference at the end of the war. His intercourse with foreign governments and statesmen had convinced Colonel House that when the final peace conference came—as come it must, no matter how dark may be the immediate horizon—the American delegates should be in a position to match wits on equal terms with the leading diplomats of Europe. Also, he knew that for two years and more European chancelleries had been at work collecting information on the moot points which would have to be settled, and had so much the start on the United States, wholly aside from the fact that every European country, including Germany and Austria, possessed diplomats whose knowledge of world politics, through long training and experience, was superior to that possessed by American statesmen, who, very naturally, had never had occasion

PREPARING FOR THE PEACE CONFERENCE

to familiarize themselves with the ethnic, geographical, or commercial problems of Europe and Asia, or the conflicting colonial claims of the white races in Africa.

"The theory of this undertaking," Colonel House said, in outlining his preparations for peace, "is that it is better to be in a position to view intelligently what you are trying to do, than to be obliged to jump blindfolded. In any conference the people come off best who are most thoroughly equipped, who hold the highest cards in the way of knowledge of what they are about. It is our intention that the American delegates to the peace conference shall be so equipped. We shall endeavor to supply them with all the information they may require, even regarding points in which it is quite probable that the United States may take no active interest. It is always advisable to understand thoroughly what is going on, although you may not be directly concerned in the event.

"The fact that this work is going forward does not mean that we anticipate peace soon, or at any definite date. It may be this year, or next year, or the year after that. The governments of our Allies began this work of preparation long ago, when peace was even more remote than it is to-day. You might describe our attitude as the reverse of the old saying, 'In time of peace prepare

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

for war.' We are preparing in time of war for peace."

Before Colonel House went to Europe in October to attend the Inter-Allied Conference, and the first sitting of the Supreme War Council, at Versailles, he had the work of his peace inquiry well under way. The scheme adopted was to unite the ablest minds in the country under the direction of an Executive Committee, and a few specialists, in different fields, who, in turn, were directly supervised by Colonel House himself. By this arrangement he was relieved of the burden of details, and could devote himself to the high lights of the undertaking.

He found that individuals, societies, universities, and colleges were glad to coöperate with him, and those persons and institutions possessing the necessary funds eagerly volunteered to defray the expenses of whatever work they were given to do. The faculties and research machinery of practically every important higher institution of learning, the Library of Congress, the New York Public Library, the American Geographical Society, and the National Board for Historical Service, with many other similar organizations, were placed at his disposal.

The Executive Committee is headed by Dr. Mezes, president of the College of the City of New York, and brother-in-law of Colonel House,

PREPARING FOR THE PEACE CONFERENCE

as director, with Walter Lippman, formerly one of the editors of the *New Republic*, and writer on international topics, as secretary. Colonel House is particularly fortunate in having Dr. Mezes available as his right-hand man. Besides being a scholar of great attainments and wide range of learning, especially in history, economics, and international relations, Dr. Mezes has the peculiar distinction of standing toward Colonel House in precisely the same relation which Colonel House occupies with the President. In other words, his mind works along the same lines. He sees things in the same perspective. Colonel House can ask him to do something, and be sure that in Dr. Mezes's hands the work will have the same treatment as he would give it himself. When Colonel House went to Europe the last time he was able to leave the supervision of the newly-created inquiry in charge of his brother-in-law, without worrying over the possible mistakes in policy or distortion of his intentions. He could have placed such confidence in no other individual.

The research consultant of the Executive Committee is Prof. James T. Shotwell, professor of history, at Columbia University, author of "The Religious Revolution of To-day," assistant general editor of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and editor of "Records of Civilization, Sources and

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

Studies." The gathering of material on territorial questions is in charge of Dr. Isaiah Bowman, the geographer. Prof. A. A. Young, ex-director of research of the War Trade Board, is in charge of investigations in international economies. Questions in international law are handled by D. H. Miller, of the New York Bar, assisted by many others. It would be impossible to give a complete list of all the scientists, trade experts, students, and scholars who are combining in this work, most of them without any remuneration from the Government.

The first aim has been to do the work well. The second has been to do it inexpensively. In this respect, it may be said that, thanks to the whole-hearted coöperation which has been extended to the Government by universities and societies, the net expense will be negligible.

For example, the services of the American Geographical Society's expert map-makers have been placed at the disposal of the inquiry, a facility of the utmost importance. When the American delegates go to the peace conference they will take with them an immense assortment of maps illustrating every phase of the territorial, economic, and ethnologic problems at stake. They will be able to turn at need, say, to Map X4, depicting racial distribution in Bessarabia, and see the exact proportion of the Rumanian, Jewish,

PREPARING FOR THE PEACE CONFERENCE

and Slavonic stocks, and how they are dispersed geographically. Or they can ask for Map Y2 and find the areas of land suitable for white colonization in equatorial Africa. Of course, both these instances are purely imaginary, but they show the system, and how it will work in application.

Besides maps and charts, investigators have accumulated quantities of data on every subject which might be considered within the purview of the peace conference, and an elaborate card-index will permit the ready consultation of the mine of information by American delegates who may wish to ascertain the conditions in a given tract of territory, regarding which a difference of opinion exists. This means that the American representatives will not be obliged to depend upon information from any other delegation, be it from an allied nation or an enemy nation, in reaching an opinion on any subject. Complete independence of outlook is thus assured to our representatives, without the sacrifice of intelligence or breadth of vision.

The most difficult part of the undertaking was the necessity of having all the data mobilized, so that the facts and figures regarding any region or question could be pulled out from the total and brought to bear on any phase of that particular region or question, in order to give an exact picture of it, not only in so far as that one point was

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

concerned, but as it was related to adjoining countries and problems. This difficulty was met by making the basis of calculation the least unit of Government, corresponding to the American county, whatever it was called and however administered. These counties or primary units are listed separately in each area under discussion, and the data dealing with them can be obtained at once, either separately for each unit or altogether for the entire region.

Colonel House and his assistants have approached this big proposition in the spirit of modern research and scholarly efficiency. They have left nothing to chance. They quarter every field of speculation and analyze each contested subject from every side. No country has gone at the problem of preparing for peace in such a whole-souled, open-minded mood. Foreign governments, no matter how pure their motives, have some pet hobbies and secret ambitions mingled with their war aims, and they are inclined to stress these in laying their foundations for peace. But the United States is going to the peace conference without a single selfish motive. The President is just as determined to secure justice for Germany as he is for Belgium, but he is going to be in a position to form his own judgment of Germany's rights and not have to depend upon the Kaiser's delegates.

PREPARING FOR THE PEACE CONFERENCE

The only ambition of the United States is to help in rearranging the world's affairs so that war will be made impossible—or so difficult and expensive that the most arrogant nation will hesitate ever again to resort to the sword. And as a means to its end, the representatives of the United States must be acquainted with all the questions which will come up for discussion, whether the United States expects to have anything to say about them or not—because it stands to reason that unless the Government knows all there is to know about a question it will be impossible to decide whether we should speak about it.

When Colonel House and his assistants had determined the main outlines of their work, they turned to concrete problems. To begin with, they decided that there were certain regions of urgency, presenting questions of pressing importance, the evidence regarding which should be collected as rapidly as possible. For one thing, there was Alsace-Lorraine. The peace investigators have made a painstaking study of the entire subject of Alsace and Lorraine, in their relation to France and to Germany.

Elaborate records and statistics of the population have been accumulated, indicating the proportion of French and German inhabitants in the two provinces, in the communes, in the rural and in the urban districts; the proportions in which

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

French and German, respectively, are spoken; and the records of elections, with regard to the demonstration therein of the spirit of independence; the movement of trade and commerce during association with France and after the annexation to Germany. The result is an orderly array of facts on practically every aspect of the history of Alsace-Lorraine, and on the treatment of like questions in the past.

Of the regions of urgency, probably none presents more difficulties in the way of settlement than that comprising the lands between the Persian Gulf and the Baltic Sea. There, where the Germans are trying to rear a row of barrier states, subordinate to themselves economically and acting as buffers to ward off the newly-awakened spirit of Russian liberalism, where Turkey is endeavoring to wrest back the lands of Armenia, Georgia, and the Caucasus conquered from her by Russia, a myriad of vexed problems, submerged racial desires, national antipathies, religious animosities, and fruits of bygone oppressions are lying in wait to trip the unwary statesman. There, where Germany's new ambitions lie, the astute and unscrupulous diplomats of Berlin will make their bitterest fight for dominance, in the hope that their wrecked commercial empire in the west may be built up anew on a Russia and Turkey economically enslaved. American states-

PREPARING FOR THE PEACE CONFERENCE

men know very little about this part of the world, and the data Colonel House's inquiry will have ready for them should be of the greatest value. It will put them in a position to check up on every statement made in their presence.

A second region of urgency is the Central African Colonial area. The conquest of Germany's enormous African territories is one of the minor trump cards held by the Entente Allies. Public opinion in England and France seems to be divided on the question of returning these lands after the war, if the Allies win and can dictate their own terms. In British South Africa, the idea of retaining at least German South West Africa is openly advocated, and in some quarters it has been hinted that an order to return the lands won by General Smuts would be disobeyed. Although the United States has no commercial or political stake in Africa, this problem certainly will exert a big influence at the final settlement, and it will be necessary for the representatives of the United States to be able to judge of the value of the conflicting statements and claims which will be put forward. So Colonel House's assistants are studying the entire question of the Central African colonies, French, Belgian, Portuguese, and British, as well as German, the climate of different sections, the products, the native tribes, the past conduct of the white governments

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

towards their charges, the possibilities for white colonization, the circumstances of settlement and so forth.

Still another important subject of study is the economic needs of the Central Powers. The Teutonic Allies may be relied upon to make a plea for special consideration, in view of their sufferings in the war, and to attempt to cast responsibility for the struggle on their enemies by alleging economic repression in the past. The delegates of the United States will be provided with full statistics covering a period of years, showing the various economic needs of Germany and Austria-Hungary, how they may be satisfied and the exact amount of their natural resources which must be supplemented from outside.

The freedom of the seas is the fifth question which is occupying the inquiry's attention. This truly momentous problem, upon which may very well depend the future peace of the world, is being examined from every angle of law, commerce, and history. The researches of the peace investigation will enable the American delegates to present the case for the well-known theories of the United States with weight and precision.

The claims of the Jews in Palestine; the age-old struggle of the rival Slav nationalities in the Balkans; the fate of the Czecho-Slavs, Slovaks, Dalmatians, Italians, and other subject races of

PREPARING FOR THE PEACE CONFERENCE

Austria; the Rumanian lands held by the Dual Monarchy; the future of Poland and Greece; Arabia, and the subject races of Turkey—these are some of the matters regarding which the experts of Colonel House's Committee are inquiring at length, with patience and resource. All the plans which have been put forward at one time or another for the prevention of war have been placed under examination, with a view to ascertaining their practicability or usefulness, with due emphasis upon the rival claims of a world court or an international league of peace, or any other scheme for enforcing the standards of civilization.

"It is not that we are trying to find a way to peace," said Colonel House, "or to settle off-hand the difficulties of the world. We are simply trying to lay the basis for our country's share in ending the war on terms which will be so fair and equitable that they will leave a minimum of heart-burnings and jealousies to disturb the generations which will come after us."

CHAPTER XXIV

HIS ESTIMATE OF PRESIDENT WILSON

COLONEL HOUSE has the reputation of being phlegmatic and reserved. Nothing could be further from the truth. Those who really know him agree that he is unusually warm-hearted and emotional in temperament. He is easily stirred to enthusiasm, for instance, in discussing Woodrow Wilson. He regards the President as the greatest living statesman in the world, the foremost exponent of progress in this generation, a ruler who will be linked in American history with Washington and Lincoln. He thinks, too, that Americans have not yet come to a clear realization of Mr. Wilson's greatness, which has grown—and is still growing—to keep pace with the demands made upon the President, demands such as no President ever had to meet. Perhaps the nearest approximation to the situation which confronted Mr. Wilson in the first two years of the war was the plight of the infant republic in the days of Washington's Administration, when the British on one side and the French on the other strove to force American participation in the war against the Directorate.

HIS ESTIMATE OF PRESIDENT WILSON

Washington, with Hamilton's cool brain behind him, contrived to steer a skillful course amidst all the shoals and traps set by the conflicting forces surrounding him, and in spite of the intrigues of his fellow-countrymen was able to avoid the reefs of disaster which inevitably must have wrecked the Republic's hopes had he suffered it to be compromised in the concerns of Europe.

Wilson, like Washington, was hampered by intrigue, by the apathy of the masses, by treachery, by covert sedition, by partisan politics, and by deluded fools. One is tempted to compare him to Washington also in the austere remoteness of his character, in the lack of understanding which met his early efforts. Again, in Colonel House he had a trusted adviser, as Washington had in Hamilton, essentially opposed though these two advisers may be in their attitude toward popular government. But there is this difference in the two situations: instead of the feeble, sprawling nation of 3,000,000 souls that Washington ruled, Mr. Wilson had behind him 100,000,000, and once public sentiment was welded in the crucible fires lit by German lawlessness, the millions became a unit for the defence of liberty and civilization, with the might to impose their will on all who opposed them.

One of the most persistent fables concerning

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

the relationship between the President and Colonel House depicts House as an acquiescent individual whose influence is based upon his capacity for agreeing with the Presidential decisions. As a man of supreme independence and pugnacious adherence to his own views, nothing galls Colonel House more than this.

"I know people say I have the faculty of always agreeing with the President," he says. "They say I find out what he wants to hear and then say it to him. That is ridiculous. How long do you suppose I—or anybody else—would last with a man like Woodrow Wilson, if I played the part of echo? And if all that the President wanted was a man who would agree with him, who would be his echo, he could find ten, a hundred, or a thousand men, more agreeable personally than I. It is preposterous to suppose that a man of the President's disposition would tolerate an acquaintance based on such conditions. The person who gives heed to gossip of this kind confesses his ignorance of the President's character.

"It is true that we do not disagree very often, because our minds run parallel on most subjects, but we have disagreed in the past and we still disagree on some subjects. I do not think we have ever failed to think alike on anything of great importance, but if we should I would not hesitate to say so, and I am sure the President



THE LATEST PICTURE OF COLONEL HOUSE WITH THE
PRESIDENT, TAKEN SEPTEMBER, 1917, AT COLONEL HOUSE'S
SUMMER HOME AT MAGNOLIA, MASS.

HIS ESTIMATE OF PRESIDENT WILSON

would expect me to. He would have very little respect for the opinions of a man who was not willing to abide by his own judgment.

"I never argue with the President when we disagree, any more than with any other man, beyond a certain point. When we have talked a matter over and we find that we are opposed upon it, I drop it—unless and until I come across some new piece of evidence to support my views. A great deal of time is lost in useless argument. If two men, each reasoning conscientiously from the same basis of facts, reach conflicting viewpoints, then it is usually impossible to dissuade one or other of them without the development of new facts or of some eventuality from the facts previously known. This is a general theory of conduct."

In this, as in all similar misapprehensions, Colonel House is exercised not over what is said about himself, but over the distortion of the President's personality in the popular mind. He effaces himself absolutely where the President is concerned. The end he set for himself, when he first became Mr. Wilson's friend, was to do all that he could to assist Mr. Wilson in the working out of the policies which both of them felt the country needed. Personal credit was the last thing Colonel House desired. It is something which means nothing to him now. The only rea-

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

son why he permits any disclosures about himself and the part he has taken in contemporary events is his belief that no opportunity should be given to opponents of the Administration to attack the President through him.

His estimate of Mr. Wilson is summed up in these words:

"He is a wonderful man. Think of a man with his equipment, his brain, his learning, his ideas, being President! All his life he had been developing his mind, schooling himself in theoretical problems of government, studying the precedents of the past. At the end of that time, still in the full possession of his powers, rugged in health, with his mind open and his eyes undimmed, he was given the opportunity to write a new chapter in the world's affairs. I have never entirely recovered from my surprise that he should have been elected. It has always seemed too good to be true. But it is only fair to say that it is a vindication of popular government and the discrimination of the individual voter.

"Sometimes early in his first term, the President was uneasy, for he was and is very humble in his heart. But I always knew that he had nothing to worry about. I was sure that he would make a lasting impression upon the history of the country and the world. He will, too, and before he retires from public life, I look

HIS ESTIMATE OF PRESIDENT WILSON

to see this judgment accepted, not only by the great majority of his fellow-citizens, but by the world at large.

“Woodrow Wilson has that rare combination of ideas and judgment, with fearlessness of the politicians, that is worth everything else there is. Few leaders have ever dared to take that stand, and that is why he has been so successful. From the start his policy was, never mind the politicians, play to the people. It was his own idea; nobody had to suggest it to him. He had been doing it in New Jersey, before he was elected President. It was in him—the vision to see that true leadership consisted in ‘talking direct to the people,’ as he put it, himself. Any leader who has the courage to disregard the politicians cannot help succeeding.

“Personally, he is one of the most fascinating men I have ever met, a great thinker, a great doer, a great gentleman.

“You know, there are two kinds of men who lead. In one class you find the man of action, endowed with the animal magnetism which bends other men to accept his will. Give the man of this type an idea, and he can drive it to accomplishment; but he, himself, is never a man of vision. He cannot see any farther than the goal he has set himself for immediate attainment. It is strange how these men of brute force compel

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

the obedience of men of far greater intellectual powers. I have seen one such man by sheer physical force dominate a group of men which contained several who were incomparably his superiors intellectually. Mr. Wilson is in the other class, the class of men, limited in numbers, who combine driving power, magnetism, and vigor with vision.

“Where the President excels is in his union of the capabilities of the dreamer, the seer, and the man of action. He can study the future and conceive great plans of economic and social betterment, and then he can undertake to make his vision real. Such a union of powers is seldom seen. Men of this type are almost never put in positions where they can work for the good of mankind. But the chance came to Mr. Wilson, and he has turned it to an advantage, which is little understood even now. Only in later generations, when his policies are seen through the perspective of time, will there be an adequate perception of the debt the world owes him.

“In Europe, they recognized him long ago as the greatest constructive statesman of our age, a man whose eyes peer far into the clouded future, whose actions are freed of the clinging pettinesses of convention. He has been named by the forward-moving nations as the chief advocate of civilization, and he has won their support by force

HIS ESTIMATE OF PRESIDENT WILSON

of intellect alone. I think there never was an instance of a man who obtained such universal respect by the righteousness of his actions. It is as comforting a sign of the inherent sanity and health of civilization as his election and reëlection were of the independence and liberalism of Americans.

“Here at home, I fear, there have been some who doubted his honesty of purpose. I am not speaking now of the professional politicians, or that small class who viewed with jealousy any step for the protection of the rights of the many, as contrasted with the privileges of the few. I mean men high-souled and honorable, honestly doubting, themselves. To such we can only say: ‘Look carefully over the President’s every act. Examine every policy. Consider the many-sided aspects of the problems he had to solve. Then judge if he ever acted other than as he sincerely believed to be for the well-being of all concerned.’ If they are not convinced, we can say no more. The cards are on the table. And the whole trend of history so far has upheld the President’s course.

“I know he has been assailed for his attitude toward business. There have never been more unjust attacks or more wicked perversions of the truth. Ever since he was elected, Mr. Wilson has been the firm friend of honest business—yes, and

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

of Big Business. He was the first President who ever came out and said that he held nothing against Big Business, if Big Business was conducted as honestly as Little Business. He would not subscribe to abuse of large corporations simply because they were large corporations. His unfailing test for any enterprise was the justness and probity of its conduct. He has been the first President to come out and speak for the railroads. When the railroads were suffering most, he had the courage to approve publicly of their need for higher rates—something no other President had done. Legitimate business has nothing to fear from him. On the contrary it has everything to thank him for. He secured the enactment of the first adequate banking and currency laws the country ever had, laws which will prevent the occurrence of disastrous and causeless financial panics such as have crippled business at intervals in the past. It seems to me the record shows that Mr. Wilson has been just as much the friend of honest business, whether big or little, as he has been the friend of the working man.

“For myself, though, I like best to think of him as the man, rather than the President. My association with him has been something that I shall look back upon, if I live, with pride and without a single regret. He has been kind, loyal, and unselfish. I said before that he is a great gentle-

HIS ESTIMATE OF PRESIDENT WILSON

man. He is the greatest, I think, I have ever known. And with it all, he has the power to reach the minds and souls of multitudes. He has political intuition of the highest order, and an imagination which enables him to know, in spite of the seclusion of office, what ordinary men and women are thinking and feeling.

"His courtesy is instinctive. His first thought is always for the welfare of his friends. He is staunch in supporting any one he knows. You might select plenty of instances in the events of the last five years to prove this. One of the surest ways to make him stick by a man is to attack that man. And the beautiful thing about his friendship is that he never advertises it. He has done things for me, gone to my defence when he thought I was wronged, without ever speaking a word to me about it. The only way in which I learned of his help was by a chance word from some one else or indirectly after a long time had passed.

"He is always solicitous about my health, always reluctant to place new work in my hands, for fear that it may be over-burdening me, always cautioning me not to undertake any more than I deem myself able to do without strain. In little things he is equally solicitous. The last time I went to the theater with him, some people in the box in front of us moved back, evidently because

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

they thought they might interfere with the President's view of the stage. He was quick to perceive this, and instantly he leaned over and begged the party to move their chairs to the front of the box, assuring them that he was not inconvenienced.

"To me the inspiring thing about him is that he has no petty side. He is big every way you look at him. He is so big that he is willing to take help from others—and that is a true test of greatness. He has been the most successful political leader the Democratic party ever had. More than that, he has been the most successful leader the American people ever had, and I know that millions of Republicans will support that assertion. It was fortunate for America, fortunate for civilization, that Woodrow Wilson was elected in 1912."

The friendship between the two is as complete as it is unquestioning. Periodically there are reports that the President has broken with Colonel House or that Colonel House has refused to endorse some policy of Mr. Wilson's; but there has never been the slightest foundation for these statements. They always come towards the end of the summer, when Colonel House has been driven by the heat to suspend his visits to Washington, and he and the President have not met for several months. The last story of this

HIS ESTIMATE OF PRESIDENT WILSON

kind appeared in September, 1917, and to the Boston reporter who rushed to Colonel House's summer home to confirm it, House administered a mild rebuke.

"You are behind your schedule, my friend," he said. "This story has always come out in August. Remember that next time."

CHAPTER XXV

METHODS OF WORK AND WAYS OF RELAXATION

COLONEL HOUSE makes his home when in New York at 115 East 53d Street, an unpretentious apartment house between Park and Lexington Avenues, in no wise different from thousands of similar buildings which dot the upper districts of the island of Manhattan. People who have heard of the House "millions" are always astonished and a little disappointed when they first visit his modest apartment of six or seven rooms. In fact, Colonel House tells with quiet amusement of the remark made by a well-known Senator, who came from Washington to confer with him on some pending question of legislation.

"Why, Colonel," exclaimed the Senator, "I stopped at the door downstairs and started to go away. I thought you lived in a palatial private house, and when I saw this apartment building on a side-street I was sure I must have come to the wrong address."

It is Colonel House's pride that the work he

METHODS OF WORK

does is his voluntary contribution to the country. But he does experience a certain amount of difficulty in getting it done on his private means. He can afford only one secretary, and with such slender assistance, no matter how able it may be, he is always taxed to keep up with the work which pours in on him from all directions. No phase of his mission to Europe in the early winter of 1917 pleased him more than the luxury of having every available facility for getting work done promptly and well. He had plenty of trained secretaries, competent subordinates, experts in every field of discussion at his elbow. It was a relief to a man who likes above all things to see a job executed efficiently.

"That was one of the pleasantest experiences of my life," he said afterwards. "Everything went the way it ought to go. I gave just two instructions to the members of the Mission: Don't let there be any differences among yourselves, and let us work rather than entertain ourselves. They pulled together, and they pulled hard. They were a splendid lot of fellows, and I don't suppose so many men ever did more work in a given space of time than they did."

During the eight months of the year which Colonel House spends in New York he gives practically all his time to the work of helping the Administration. It is not only matters connected

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

with international politics which come within his ken, but practically every conceivable sort of problem. He sees people who otherwise would demand some of the President's time, and blocks them off, digesting their information for Mr. Wilson's ear, or discarding it, if it is valueless. He is a very fast worker, and manages to handle an enormous mass of correspondence, besides seeing anywhere from ten to twenty people in a day. Social service, labor questions, as well as politics and Administrative detail—all come before him. The other day a man arrived from Boston, after telegraphing for an appointment in regard to Liberty Loan matters. To him was given a scant five minutes and he departed, with instructions to embody his views in a memorandum.

"Like a lot of other people, he could have spared himself the trouble of the trip," commented Colonel House, as he turned to the next on his list of appointments, "but they always seem to have the idea that they cannot make their points unless they talk to you face to face. I usually have to tell them all the same thing: put your thought in a memorandum, and I will lay it before whoever is the interested official in the case."

Naturally, Colonel House's days are mapped out with rigid precision. To begin with, he al-

METHODS OF WORK

lows himself nine hours' sleep a night, for sleep, he asserts, is the first requirement of good health. In the morning he plows through his mail, and then goes out for a walk of half an hour's duration. Usually, upon his return from this exercise, he is in a position to begin with his appointments, and, more often than not, even the lunch-table is utilized for an informal conference. After luncheon he begins the first of a series of interviews, which continue until dinner time, with another brief intermission of half an hour for a walk. In the evening he reads reports, State documents, and the digests of the news which have been sent to him from Washington. Rarely he goes out with Mrs. House or some friend for a little relaxation. He likes a good play, and is not above appreciating the movies, tastes which he has in common with his friend, the President.

One thing he will not tolerate is being lionized. He does not like to go to dinners or social affairs where more than from six to eight are present. He likes society, but he cannot afford to waste the time and energy it requires, and if he went out to one party he would offend somebody by refusing an invitation to another. Now and then he takes time off to go out for luncheon with a group of men—generally old acquaintances in politics or chums at college—at a club. He enjoys this sort of thing very much, as he does chats

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

with congenial spirits about his own fireside at home. He is a member of some half-dozen clubs in New York, but he says himself he would have to be introduced to the doorman of every one of them before he could gain admittance.

"I haven't been south of 23d Street in fifteen or twenty years," he once said. "I never call on anybody because I haven't time to do it, and if I called on one man, I should have to call on others. People are kind enough to come to me, and this enables me to see more of them, to know better what they are thinking, and to accumulate valuable suggestions and information. Another reason for me to stay at home is that I should soon exhaust my strength if I tried to go out continually. And one more reason—if one more is necessary—is that there is a great advantage to people in knowing that I am always on tap here. My friends know they can reach me at any hour of the day or night, unless I happen to be out for a walk or at luncheon, or something like that."

Colonel House's workroom is a tiny study in one corner of the apartment, a room perhaps fifteen feet long and ten feet wide. It is just large enough to contain a desk, two or three chairs, and a lounge. The walls are lined with book-shelves, and over the shelves are rows and rows of autographed photographs of the great men of the present and portraits of the leaders of the past—

METHODS OF WORK

Washington, Lincoln, Lee, Stonewall Jackson. On top of the desk is a row of war books, of which Colonel House receives about two a day—more than he can possibly read, with the best intentions in the world and the liveliest appreciation of the authors' remembrance of him. His own reading tastes are shown to be sufficiently catholic by the titles of the books on the shelves opposite.

Kipling's "The Day's Work" is next to Chamberlain's "Foundations of the Nineteenth Century." Plato, Charles Lamb, John Stuart Mill, "The Spoon River Anthology," "Capt. Bill McDonald, Texas Ranger," "Men Around the Kaiser," by Frederick Wile, and Brand Whitlock's "Forty Years of It" are others near by. In ordinary times, Colonel House is a steady reader, with a tendency to favor the philosophical and historical; but he is seldom able to indulge himself this way nowadays. Practically the only reading diversion left open to him is the American short story, of which he is a great admirer. He finds relaxation in spending an odd half-hour, when the pressure lets up temporarily, over O. Henry or some contemporary like Richard Washburn Child or Booth Tarkington.

In addition to books, Colonel House is deluged with copies of speeches—he receives an average of one copy of every other speech delivered in

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

the United States—and begging letters. The first are sources of amusement, if nothing more. The latter are an embarrassment, for which he has to thank the ridiculous stories of his fabulous wealth.

Visitors who have appointments with Colonel House are generally ushered into the study, but sometimes appointments overlap, and then the parlor is used, as well. The study has been the scene of some important decisions. Here in one day Colonel House has conferred with the Ambassadors of three foreign countries—not all at the same time, of course. Here he has received and talked with practically every distinguished visitor to the United States from abroad. It is not an exaggeration to say that most of the well-known men and women of this country have sat in that little room, including President Wilson himself and the majority of the members of the Cabinet.

When the President used to visit him, Colonel House cleared everybody out of the apartment except the servants. Mrs. House went to stay with one of her daughters, and the two friends were left by themselves to talk at their ease. The President always enjoyed these little parties *à deux*, and when public affairs were not too pressing he never failed to come to New York several times in the winter for them. In the

METHODS OF WORK

seclusion of Colonel House's apartment, with secret service men in the hall and downstairs to shoo away visitors and the telephone disconnected, they could discuss matters with a freedom impossible in Washington. But the rush of events in these turbid days keeps the President in Washington and the two friends are no longer able to mingle work with recreation in the little apartment in East 53d Street.

In his own home, Colonel House is the ideal host. He has the courtesy of the old school, which was most strikingly developed in the South. It is the courtesy which means gentility, gentleness, which makes no distinctions between inferiors, equals, and superiors. He is as courteous to a servant or a messenger-boy as he is to the President. In manner he is quiet, almost deferential. He is compact in build and slim, moving with an agility unusual at his age. He is about the middle height, and he would not be at all remarkable in appearance, if it were not for his head and his eyes—particularly his eyes. They are the feature which stamps itself upon the memory. As Norman Hapgood wrote in a recent sketch in *Leslie's Weekly*:

"It is a kind face, bright, eager, and gentle, that goes with manners that never injured stranger or friend. As one looks at the whole man, the blue eyes are the center of attention.

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

Outside of these luminous eyes there is no external feature that commands attention. It is, perhaps, not so much an object that confronts one as a presence, an atmosphere created by expression and by manner."

Colonel House's head is narrow, with prominent, almost Mongolian, cheek-bones, and a delicately carved jaw. Of late years his hair and close-cropped mustache have grown from gray to white, and the wrinkles have come thickly on his face. He has perfect control over his facial muscles, and when he wishes to disguise his feelings, not a quiver reveals the thoughts passing through his brain. At such times his face becomes a mask, and his eyes take on a blank look which is singularly disconcerting. He may not like the comparison, but one cannot help feeling that, if fate had cast him for a rôle on the old frontier, he would have made an excellent gambler of the traditional type. Certainly, nobody would ever have guessed whether he held a royal flush or a pair of deuces.

He speaks in a low, clear voice—which is seldom raised—with a trace of the pleasant slurring Southern accent. His choice of language, his method of thought, his nicety of phrase, are all those of the gently bred. To know Colonel House at close range is to know the reason for his unbroken chain of successes in diplomatic work

METHODS OF WORK

abroad. He has the *savoir faire* which so many Americans lack, and his unusually wide acquaintanceship and close study of men of all classes, together with his travels in many lands, have given him the ability to get along in any company. He has always been as much at home, whether dining with King George in Buckingham Palace, chatting with the Kaiser at Potsdam, or lunching at the Elysée Palace, as he was in the days when his library in Austin was the gathering-place of the men who governed Texas.

CHAPTER XXVI

HIS POLITICAL AIMS AND HIS FUTURE

THE political aims and future of Colonel House excite almost as much interest in professional political circles of all parties as those of President Wilson himself. You hear on one side the assertion that Mr. Wilson is grooming Colonel House for exploitation as his successor—a statement which receives the derision it deserves from those who possess Colonel House's confidence, and is probably as amusing to the President. On the other hand, several small Republican newspapers in the rural districts have been spreading broadcast the announcement that the real reason for Colonel House's delay in returning to Europe to resume his seat on the Supreme War Council was his chagrin and humiliation over the showing he made in Paris and London in comparison with the foreign statesmen he had to deal with. They say that he has begged the President not to send him back, because he anticipates a repetition of this humiliation. They are rather difficult to reconcile, those two statements, although they both spring from the brains of his political enemies.

HIS POLITICAL AIMS AND HIS FUTURE

The bitterness displayed against Colonel House by Republican politicians is not remarkable, but it is distinctly unfair. They look upon him as the arch-priest of Democracy, the grand strategist who has twice defeated them in the face of overpowering odds. And in their anger they have not scrupled to make use of any and every weapon which came to hand, slander, lies, traductions of the wickedest kind. They have ignored the sturdiness with which he has stood for Republican rights, especially since the country entered the war, and the undeniable purity of his motives.

One of the most frequent charges, which has been given currency in the past, is the assertion that Colonel House's fortune is founded upon prison labor. As usual in such matters, there is just enough of truth in this slander to make it acceptable to the kind of mentalities that delight in smirching the names of public men. Many years ago, while Colonel House was still in partnership with his two older brothers and before their father's estate had been partitioned among them, one of their plantations was worked at times by prison labor. In those days prison labor was widely used in Texas, because, as in most newly settled States, labor was hard to get in sufficient quantities.

Colonel House himself did not approve of it. He regarded the employment of prison labor as

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

an economic fallacy, let alone a social error, and he endeavored to prove this to his brothers. They agreed with him that prison labor actually was more costly and less productive than free labor, but they pointed out that it possessed the advantage of being obtainable whenever it was needed. This latter argument was unanswerable. In after life, when Colonel House had become a power in political affairs at Austin, he led the fight against the State system of farming out its convicts, and succeeded in effecting substantial reforms.

To speak the plain truth, Colonel House has no political prejudices. He happens to be a Democrat because he conceives that the principles of the Democratic party approach closer to the idealistic aims he has set for himself than the principles of the Republican party, with their increasing drag toward conservatism and tendency to rebel against the march of progress. But if the Democratic party went wrong, and the Republican party espoused the cause of the many and the liberal ideas of to-day, one might predict that Colonel House would be found among the standard bearers of the Republicans. As it is, he does not have any feeling against a man solely because that man is a Republican. He has used, himself, and secured the use by others, of a considerable number of Republicans in the last year. He is just as anxious to make use of a Republi-

HIS POLITICAL AIMS AND HIS FUTURE

can who wants to serve his country as he is to employ a Democrat. He says, frankly, that he would appoint many more Republicans to office if it was possible to do so under the existing system of American government.

He greets all kinds of men openly, without regard to party affiliations. He is ready to heed any man's advice and take it, too. Many Republican leaders have sat in the little study at 115 East 53d Street and given their views on the problems of national efficiency in the war. In this respect, Colonel House is much more open-minded than the President, who is disposed to be a strict party man, and to distrust the employment of political opponents—not from any sordid or antagonistic motive, be it understood, but simply because he considers that American political methods require a leader to have the backing of men of his own beliefs and policies, if success is to be obtained.

Colonel House is equally free from prejudice in regard to color, an extraordinary virtue in a man from the South, whose ancestors were slaveholders. The colored people of the United States are as free to bring their troubles and desires to him as their white brethren, and they do—men like Major Moton, of Tuskegee, for instance. The fact that they are black means nothing to Colonel House. The same holds true of the different

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

white races and of creeds. The Pole, the polyglot Austrian, the German, the Russian, the Italian, are all on the same footing with him. He accepts the Jew as he does the Roman Catholic. He has no bias against labor or capital; his views on these important problems are practically identical with the President's. He would punish a dishonest labor union just as swiftly and severely as he would a dishonest corporation, and he would give an honest corporation opportunity to grow and expand precisely as he would assist an honest union to obtain its justified desires. Finally, he is particularly open to the multiplying voices of the vast, seething mass of woman workers, who are gradually assuming shape as the most potential political force of the future.

The questions have been asked: What are Colonel House's political ambitions? What is the goal he strives for? Surely, it would seem, both questions have been answered in these chapters; but lest there be any misunderstanding, let the answer be reiterated, definitely and concretely. Colonel House seeks nothing for himself, no office, no honor, no emolument. He is sixty years old, approaching the twilight of his life. His wants are few, and such as they are, he has the means to satisfy them. He wishes only, like every other honorable man, to achieve some unselfish service for his country, for civilization, for hu-

HIS POLITICAL AIMS AND HIS FUTURE

manity. All his life he has served, and he would like to cap his life of service by something worth remembering. All that he has in him he is giving, has given, to this end. His effort is governed only by his strength, and it irks him that he cannot work harder. If he lives—as all good Americans must devoutly pray—his silent labors for sanity, for reasoned authority and for justice and right must operate to restore the world's balance and put down oppression. No private citizen in this country or any other has the power that he exerts; no voice is listened to like his. And this strange influence is based entirely on the understanding of him here set forth.

One of Colonel House's pet beliefs is that any man's ideas are exhausted after six or eight years' work in one job. It will be remembered, too, that he destroyed the system in Texas politics of nominating the Attorney-General to succeed the retiring Governor. And in addition to this, you will recall that after he had elected four Governors of Texas he eliminated himself from State politics, because he thought that it would be wrong for one man to try to dominate the party organization any longer. He has not abandoned this theory, and he has every intention of dropping out of national politics after Mr. Wilson retires. He will never play in another Administration the part he has played in this one

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

since 1912. Wholly aside from his modest belief that he will have exhausted his usefulness by eight years' work along certain lines, he considers that it would be as bad a precedent for him to maintain his position with another Administration as it would have been for him to have retained his grasp on the Democratic machinery in Texas after the election of Governor Lanham.

It is conceivable, of course, that he will still be called upon, after 1920, to aid his party in an advisory capacity. but the active direction of affairs must be taken up by younger hands. When Colonel House makes a decision he stands by it, and his sense of right and wrong is markedly developed. He could not be induced to reconsider any decision, after he had convinced himself that his first judgment was in accordance with the justice of the case.

If Colonel House has achieved nothing else in his connection with national politics, he has purified the conduct of campaigns and set an example of clever strategy and resourceful leadership, in place of blind expenditure of millions. He has demonstrated that a party can win in the national elections without wholesale debauchery and by placing the issues squarely before the voters. He has illustrated, with sensational success, the shift in the political center of the country and the increasing weight which must be attached to the

HIS POLITICAL AIMS AND HIS FUTURE

march of progressive doctrines in the West. Best of all, he has taken the Democratic party out of the solid South and made it really a representative party, controlling States in every section of the Union.

It may be illuminating to set down here some of his political maxims by adherence to which he gained his victories.

"What is bad morally is bad politically," he says. "Politics ought to be as honest as business. I haven't any use for bribery in politics—I have never paid a cent to a newspaper or a man in any of my campaigns. Personally, I never handle a cent of money. I have always made that the first stipulation in consenting to participate in any campaign. I will not collect funds or account for them, but I insist on knowing what is done with the money. Even when I went to Europe with the War Mission I asked the State Department to send along an expert accountant to keep track of disbursements. I will not bother with money in connection with public work. It is bad enough having to manage your own affairs.

"I wouldn't promise a man an office in return for his political support, no matter what might be the exigency of the situation. It is bad business, practically as well as morally. It is likely to create ill-feeling in other men when it becomes known. Politics, when you come right down to it,

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

is largely a question of organization. You have got to build up your organization from the bottom, as carefully as you can, and the more careful you are and the more elaborately you are able to build, the better will be your chances of success. But, of course, with the best organization usually you can't win unless you have good issues and clean candidates.

"I make it a rule never to argue about politics or religion. Even in a Presidential campaign I will not argue about politics. I find out what is a man's special interest, and then I talk to him about that. You can always find a common ground to meet on, if you look for it. Political arguments are waste of time and energy."

The fine charity of Colonel House's judgment of men is one of the attributes of his character which make a lasting impression. Of a European statesman, who had been in serious trouble at one time, and yet had been able to live down the scandal and attain new heights of fame and public trust, he said:

"Because a man makes a great mistake is not a reason for believing him unable to retrieve himself later on. The world would not be worth living in if one mistake, no matter how tremendous, was proof of failure. There are too many instances to prove the fallacy of this idea."

He is singularly reluctant to talk about his own

HIS POLITICAL AIMS AND HIS FUTURE

triumphs. Pressed once for an analysis of the way in which he had gained one of his most remarkable victories in Texas, he would only say:

"Well, you see, our crowd got together, and we picked some good issues. After a while the opposition just dropped out."

He thinks, himself, that one cause of his success has been his freedom from worry. He has most remarkable self-control, and has schooled himself by will-power to avoid the pitfalls of nervous unrest which bother most leaders.

"I never worry about a thing, no matter how big it is," he declared. "I do what I think is right, and that is all I can do. Sometimes it takes me a long time to reach a decision; sometimes I can make up my mind almost at once. But when I have decided and made such dispositions as seem called for, why, then, the matter is out of my hands, and I refuse to worry over it. The relative size of the proposition means nothing. There is no more reason for worrying over an important problem than over a trivial one. I would make a decision affecting all the people in the world with no more hesitation than one affecting everybody in this building. But I should be just as careful about the second decision as the first. In fact, it might take me longer."

His eyes twinkled.

"At the same time, I am always glad when

THE REAL COLONEL HOUSE

things turn out right," he continued. "I remember I went to bed and slept well the night after the President read his war-aims address to Congress, but I was very happy the next morning to wake up and find that it had received the endorsement anticipated for it."

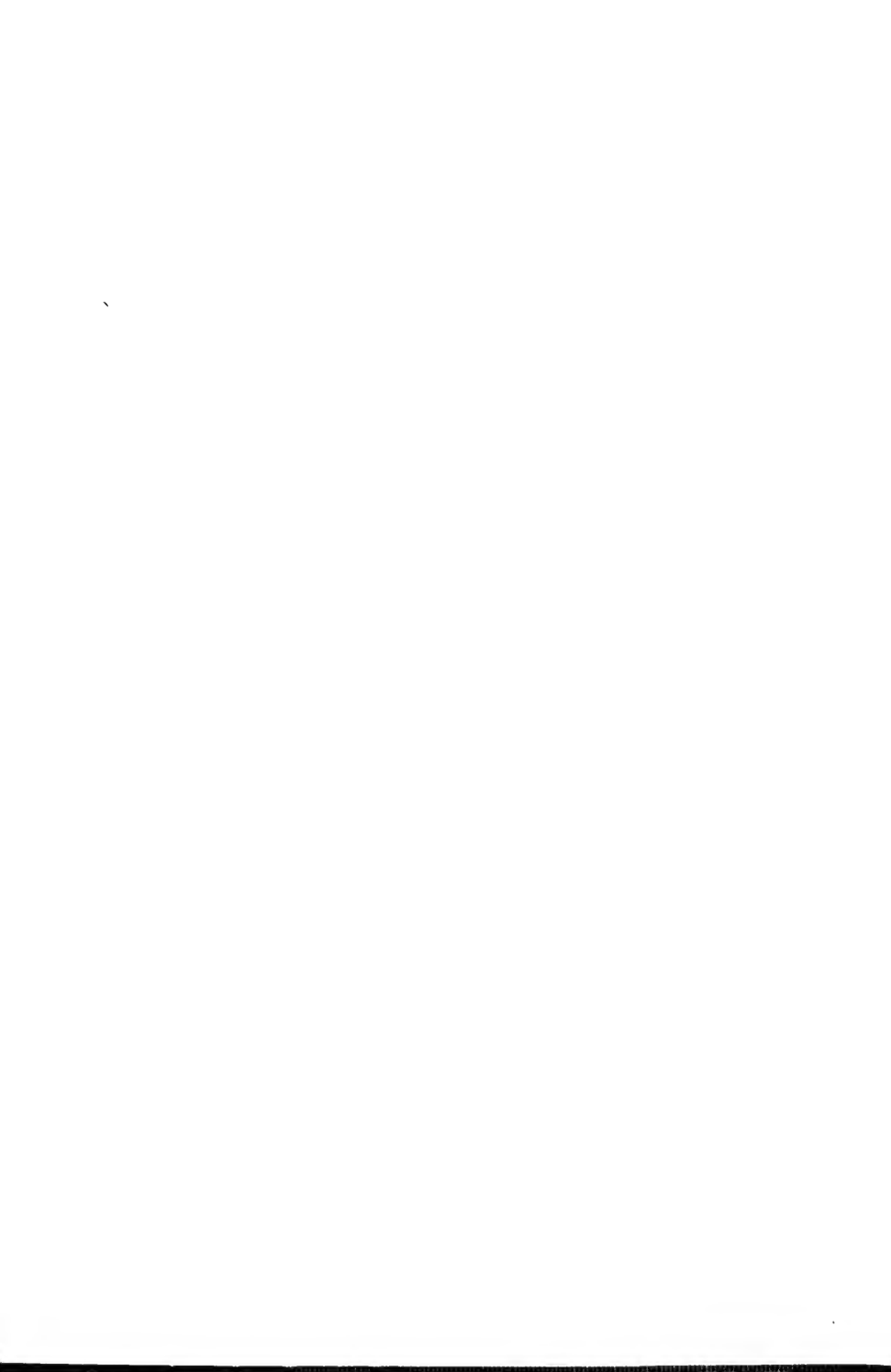
He is reticent when asked what he intends to do after he retires from public life.

"I don't know," he says. "There will be a lot to think about. Perhaps, I shall write my memoirs or put my theories for remodeling the Government—I'm an iconoclast in that respect—in a book."

Then, irrelevantly:

"I have always wanted to die with my boots on. I dread the thought of dying in bed. You know, I'm a frontier Texan, after all."





1.50



